

Summary of the 2024 Session of the High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development: 8-17 July 2024

Deep and formative tensions associated with the geopolitical and economic challenges confronting the multilateral system were a recurring theme at the 2024 session of the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF). These issues inevitably spilled onto the floor of the closing plenary as delegates considered adoption of the Ministerial Declaration, resulting in votes on two contested paragraphs: one recognizing that sustainable development cannot be realized without peace and security, and a newly proposed paragraph drawing attention to the impact of unilateral coercive measures (economic sanctions) on poverty and food security, among other Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

With the overarching theme, "Reinforcing the 2030 Agenda and eradicating poverty in times of multiple crises: the effective delivery of sustainable, resilient and innovative solutions," HLPF 2024 looked back at the 2023 SDG Summit and forward to the effective delivery of sustainable, resilient, and innovative solutions.

The Forum was tasked to review five SDGs:

- eradicate poverty in all its forms everywhere (SDG 1);
• end hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition, and promote sustainable agriculture (SDG 2);
• take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts (SDG 13);
• promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all, and build effective, accountable, and inclusive institutions at all levels (SDG 16); and
• strengthen means of implementation and revitalize the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development (SDG 17).

Introducing headline messages from the UN Secretary-General's 2024 SDG progress report, UN Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs Li Junhua stated that in the final stretch towards 2030, only 17% of SDG targets are on track to being achieved. He reiterated the report's call for bold action on peace and finance, highlighting the upcoming Summit of the Future, the Fourth International Conference on Financing for Development, and the second World Summit for Social Development, as critical milestones in advancing the SDGs.

In her opening remarks, Chair Paula Narváez, President of the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), set the tone of the session, describing it as a critical moment of consequence and choice. She identified protracted conflicts in Haiti, Gaza, South

Sudan, and Ukraine as complex challenges that have left deep scars, stressing that the promise of sustainable development cannot be met in the absence of humanitarian and preventive interventions.

The pressing debt crisis and its impact on the most vulnerable was another recurring theme, with UN Development Programme (UNDP) Administrator Achim Steiner remarking that some countries can only service the interest on debts by "raiding" budgets for healthcare, education, and welfare services. Abdullah Bin Ali Al Amri, Chairman, Environment Authority, Oman, and President of the seventh session of the UN Environment Assembly (UNEA-7), reminded delegates that they gather not only as Member States, "but as stewards of our planet, united by a common target to achieve the 2030 Agenda."

The first half of the meeting featured in-depth sessions focusing on: science, technology, and innovation; small island developing states; African countries, least developed countries, and landlocked developing countries; middle-income countries; and Major Groups and other Stakeholders. During the second half, delegates also embarked on an exchange of experiences during the presentations of 36 Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs), alongside reports from the five UN regions, an ECOSOC ministerial segment, and a high-level general debate.

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Following adoption of the Ministerial Declaration, closing statements highlighted the varying priorities of different regions and countries in the path towards sustainable development, and illustrated the breadth of issues pertinent for delivering the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

HLPF 2024 convened at UN Headquarters in New York from 8-17 July 2024, under the auspices of ECOSOC. During the three-day Ministerial segment, 115 Ministers, Vice-Ministers, Permanent Representatives and others presented speeches. More than 250 high-level special events, VNR labs, side events and exhibitions took place in person and online, with highlights including the launch of:

- the first-ever [UN system-wide strategy on water and sanitation](#);
- the [2024 Global Report on Climate and SDGs Synergy](#);
- the [Higher Education for Sustainability Initiative Action Group on Futures of Higher Education and Artificial Intelligence](#); and
- the UN Environment Programme's 2024 [global foresight report on planetary health and human wellbeing](#).

### A Brief History of the HLPF

The UN General Assembly (UNGA) established the HLPF in July 2013 in resolution 67/290 as the main forum for sustainable development issues within the UN. The HLPF is among the main outcomes of the 2012 UN Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20). It replaced the Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD), which was established at the 1992 UN Conference on Environment and Development (Earth Summit). The UNGA resolution calls on the HLPF to meet under the auspices of ECOSOC every year, and under the auspices of the UNGA every four years, to:

- provide political leadership, guidance, and recommendations for sustainable development;
- follow up and review progress in the implementation of sustainable development commitments;
- enhance the integration of the three dimensions of sustainable development; and
- have a focused, dynamic, and action-oriented agenda, ensuring the appropriate consideration of new and emerging sustainable development challenges.

In September 2015, the UN Sustainable Development Summit adopted UNGA resolution 70/1, "Transforming Our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development," a package that includes the 17 SDGs, 169 targets, and a framework for follow-up and review of implementation. The 2030 Agenda called on the HLPF to take a central role in the follow-up and review process at the global level, and to carry out country-led VNRs.

### Key Turning Points

**First Session of the HLPF:** The one-day inaugural session of the HLPF, on 24 September 2013, was held under the auspices of the UNGA and followed the closing session of the CSD. Heads of State and Government articulated several concrete proposals on the role of the HLPF, saying it should include stakeholders, emphasize accountability, review the post-2015 development agenda and the implementation of the forthcoming SDGs, and examine issues from scientific and local perspectives. There was general agreement on the need for a genuine balance between the three dimensions of sustainable development, and for the HLPF to seek to integrate these dimensions throughout the UN system.

**HLPF 2019:** This session (9-19 July 2019) completed the first four-year cycle of the HLPF. The key message from the meeting was that the global response to implementing the SDGs had not been ambitious enough, and renewed commitment and accelerated action was needed to deliver the SDGs in time. The session focused on the theme of "Empowering people and ensuring inclusiveness and equality." Five SDGs were reviewed in addition to SDG 17: SDG 4 (quality education), SDG 8 (decent work and economic growth), SDG 10 (reduced inequalities), SDG 13 (climate action), and SDG 16 (peace, justice, and strong institutions). VNRs were presented by 47 countries during the Ministerial Segment, with seven countries presenting for the second time.

**First SDG Summit:** The SDG Summit (24-25 September 2019) was the first HLPF session to convene under the auspices of the UNGA since the adoption of the 2030 Agenda. Heads of State and Government reviewed progress in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs, with just over a decade left before the target date of 2030. A political declaration was adopted on "Gearing up for a decade of action and delivery for sustainable development."

### Recent Meetings

**HLPF 2020:** This meeting was originally intended to initiate a new four-year cycle to review SDG implementation and assess progress towards achieving the 2030 Agenda. Instead, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the meeting was held virtually, and the agenda focused on the impact of the pandemic and how to "build back better." Forty-seven countries presented VNRs, with 26 presenting for the first time. The meeting ended without the adoption of a ministerial declaration, due to lack of consensus and lack of voting procedures for a virtual meeting.

**HLPF 2021:** This session took place in a hybrid format and focused on the theme of "Sustainable and resilient recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic that promotes the economic, social and environmental dimensions of sustainable development: Building an inclusive and effective path for the achievement of the 2030 Agenda in the context of the decade of action and delivery for sustainable development." To that end, the Forum reviewed progress on nine SDGs: SDG 1 (no poverty), SDG 2 (zero hunger), SDG 3 (good health and well-being), SDG 8 (decent work and economic growth), SDG 10 (reduced inequalities), SDG 12 (responsible consumption and production), SDG 13 (climate action), SDG 16 (peace, justice, and strong institutions), and SDG 17 (partnerships). Forty-four countries presented VNRs, including 10 first timers, 24 second timers, and 10 third timers.

**HLPF 2022:** The first fully in-person meeting in three years reviewed four SDGs in addition to SDG 17: SDGs 4 (quality education), 5 (gender equality), 14 (life below water), and 15 (life on land). Forty-four countries presented their VNRs. HLPF 2022 also began planning for the second SDG Summit. The Forum adopted a 142-paragraph Ministerial Declaration, with one paragraph on "the full realization of the right to self-determination of peoples living under colonial and foreign occupation" subject to a vote.

**HLPF 2023:** This session took place at the halfway point on the journey to 2030, with a growing awareness that only a minority of targets had been met and some had gone into reverse, regressing below the 2015 baseline. Five SDGs were under review: SDGs 6 (clean water and sanitation), 7 (affordable and clean energy), 9 (industry, innovation, and infrastructure), 11 (sustainable cities and communities), and 17 (partnerships for the Goals). Many status updates confirmed the somber tone of a report from the Secretary-

General, including news that SDG 6 was “alarmingly off-track.” Thirty-eight countries presented their VNRs: one for the first time, 36 for the second, and one for the third.

**Second SDG Summit:** This session took place at the halfway point to the 2030 Agenda, from 18-19 September 2023. Aiming to provide renewed impetus and accelerate action for the SDGs, the Summit gathered over 290 high-level dignitaries to assess progress on sustainable development and adopt a Political Declaration that reaffirmed their intent to effectively implement the SDGs and “turn our world towards 2030.”

### HLPF 2024 Report

Paula Narváez, ECOSOC President and Chair of HLPF 2024, opened the meeting on [Monday, 8 July](#). Delegates adopted the agenda ([E/HLPF/2024/1](#)).

Delegates watched a video highlighting the HLPF’s 2024 session as a critical moment of “consequence and choice.” UN Deputy Secretary-General Amina J. Mohammed pointed to the momentum for progress generated by the SDG Summit in 2023 and the importance of the upcoming Summit of the Future as an opportunity to restore trust and human solidarity in the face of multiple threats.

Kaira Umarov, ECOSOC Vice-President (Kazakhstan), noted the need for strengthened ECOSOC capacity to provide transformative policy guidance at a time of unprecedented convergence of crises. Umarov highlighted the need for food systems reform; climate resilience; a rights-based approach, including a focus on gender and children’s rights; reform of the international financial architecture and harnessing finance, including for loss and damage; and consideration of the ethical and human rights aspects of governance in the realm of artificial intelligence.

**From the SDG Summit to the effective delivery of sustainable, resilient, and innovative solutions:** This opening townhall on [Monday, 8 July](#), offered perspectives on the HLPF theme, with a focus on accelerating transformative and inclusive strategies to bridge the widening gap in implementing the 2030 Agenda. Li Junhua, UN Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs, introduced the UN Secretary-General’s 2024 SDG [Report](#), stating that in the final stretch towards 2030, only 17% of SDG targets are likely to be achieved. He reiterated the report’s call for bold action on peace and finance, highlighting the upcoming Summit of the Future, Fourth International Conference on Financing for Development, and second World Summit for Social Development, as critical milestones for advancing the SDGs.

Moderator Sherwin Bryce-Pease, Bureau Chief and Correspondent, South African Broadcasting Corporation, opened the interactive panel session. Paulo Rangel, Minister of State and Foreign Affairs, Portugal, stressed that accelerating SDG implementation in the face of multiple crises requires adequate financing and engaging the whole of society if no one is to be left behind.

Noting the disconnect between high-level declarations and SDG action, Geraldine Fraser-Moleketi, Chancellor, Nelson Mandela University, and Chair, UN Committee of Experts on Public Administration, called for a mindset shift towards putting “people first,” including through reframing SDG reporting processes as a citizens’ accountability tool. Amy Pope, Director-General, International Organization for Migration, highlighted the role of migration as a catalyst for sustainable development, including for

leveraging finance, calling for proactive action on safer migration pathways.

José Manuel Salazar-Xirinachs, Executive Secretary, Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), underlined three axes underpinning the means of implementing the 2030 Agenda: finance, policies, and institutional arrangements and capabilities, stressing that alongside access to data, these are crucial to drive transitions forward. Shannon Lisa, Chemicals and Waste Youth Platform, called for divesting from destructive industries and partnerships, including by establishing a fossil fuel non-proliferation treaty. She stressed meaningful and equitable youth participation at all levels.

Other issues raised by delegations included the need for: ensuring greater respect for human rights and a just transition centering people and planet; addressing the root causes of gender inequality; combating corruption and enhancing fiscal transparency; and ensuring that frontier technologies such as artificial intelligence (AI) are rights-based and do not create new forms of inequality.

### SDGs in Focus

**SDG 17 and Interlinkages with Other SDGs – Partnerships for the Goals:** On [Monday, 8 July](#), ECOSOC President Paula Narváez chaired this session, focusing on the role of international financial institutions in driving transformative progress towards the SDGs. Laura Chinchilla, former President of Costa Rica, called for a new international financial architecture and underlined that the widening gap in citizens’ trust in decision-makers’ capabilities to meet the 2030 Agenda is “more dangerous” than the USD 4 trillion SDG finance gap.

Shari Spiegel, Director, Financing for Sustainable Development Office, UN Department for Economic and Social Affairs (UN DESA), noted that lack of access to capital markets at affordable rates is an ongoing challenge for many countries that are most in need of financial allocations for sustainable development. UNDP Administrator Achim Steiner stressed that high interest rates are punitive and debt servicing is prohibitive, with the latter being maintained by “raiding” budgets for healthcare, education, and welfare services.

Rola Dashti, Executive Secretary, Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA), pointed to strategic areas to bridge the finance gap, including by embracing innovative finance tools and facilitating the effective and transparent use of public funds. Foteini Papagiotti, Acting Deputy Director, Policy and Advocacy, International Center for Research on Women, called for, among others: a multilateral legal framework to address unsustainable debt that is based on the SDGs, human rights, climate, and gender justice; and increased participation of lower- and middle-income countries in macro-economic decision making.

In the ensuing discussion, many delegates noted priorities for reforming the multilateral financial architecture, with recommendations proposed including:

- scaled-up financing to address human rights and climate change;
- steps to support debt-distressed developing countries; and
- clearer focus by multilateral development banks on global challenges, without compromising their work on global poverty.

Discussions also highlighted the need for more concessional development finance and exploring innovative instruments, alongside status reports that financing conditions for developing countries and debt financing in sub-Saharan Africa are dire. Some delegates called for more robust partnerships; greater recognition



of informal work; improved access to investments for grassroots communities; and better partnerships that leverage the strengths of different actors, acknowledging that governments alone cannot mobilize the necessary resources.

**SDG 1 and Interlinkages with Other SDGs - No Poverty:** On [Tuesday, 9 July](#), ECOSOC Vice-Presidents Bob Rae (Canada) and Tarek Ladeb (Tunisia), co-chaired this session, with discussions focusing on the multidimensional nature of poverty and exploring approaches to scale up poverty eradication efforts. Sokunpanha You, Statistics Division, UN DESA, presented highlights from the UN Secretary-General's 2024 report on SDG progress, noting that current trends will result in 590 million people still living in extreme poverty by 2030.

Rola Dashti, ESCWA, reported that over half of the people living in poverty globally are in Africa, with the region therefore unlikely to reach SDG 1 targets by 2030 in any realistic scenario. Ilze Brands Kehris, Assistant Secretary-General for Human Rights, and Head, UN Human Rights Office in New York, observed that “poverty has a woman’s face” and called for prioritized spending to meet human rights obligations.

Leonidas Iza Salazar, President, Confederation of Indigenous Nationalities of Ecuador, called for action to tackle fiscal injustice in pursuit of wealth redistribution. Vercilene Dias, Founder, National Network of Quilombola Lawyers, Brazil, highlighted the close link between poverty and structural racism and segregation, and called for a specific reference to this in the HLPF Ministerial Declaration.

In the subsequent discussion, many noted that addressing the root causes of poverty requires policies designed to address synergies across the SDGs, and recommended policy approaches that consider the multidimensional nature of poverty. Several delegates called for debt restructuring and forgiveness, pointing to the challenge faced by many countries that are forced to divert expenditure on essential service provision towards debt repayments. Speakers reported on successful measures to tackle poverty, and raised further related issues, including the need to address political will and structural factors such as neoliberalism.

In their closing messages, panelists highlighted:

- citizens are key to holding their governments accountable for delivering on the SDGs;
- multilateralism is the only effective way forward;
- improved metrics can help guide actions, track trends, and recognize successes;
- the multiple dimensions of poverty are an “assault” on a range of human rights; and
- “an ounce of prevention is better than a pound of cure.”

**SDG 2 and Interlinkages with Other SDGs – Zero Hunger:** Opening this session on [Tuesday, 9 July](#), Chair Narváez characterized progress on this SDG as sobering.

Faryal Ahmed, Statistics Division, UN DESA, noted persistent global food insecurity in the face of multiple global crises, and reported an estimated 20% of children under five will suffer from stunting in 2030. Armida Salsiah Alisjahbana, Executive Secretary, Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), stressed the importance of regional action to harness expertise and collaboration for holistic and innovative solutions.

Opening the interactive panel discussion, Moderator Afshan Khan, Coordinator, Scaling Up Nutrition Movement, stressed that malnutrition disproportionately affects women and youth. Iain Wright, Vice Chair, Steering Committee of the High-Level Panel

of Experts on Food Security and Nutrition, said intersecting global crises have exposed the vulnerabilities of our food systems, citing the loss of 10% of Africa’s gross domestic product (GDP) annually due to child stunting.

Inaya Ezzedine, Member of Parliament, Lebanon, discussed the links between conflict and food insecurity, and called for the right to food to be reinforced in national and international legislation and accountability frameworks. Pointing to the rise of non-communicable diseases, Aline Mosnier, Scientific Director, FABLE Pathways Consortium, France, called for more coherent policies to account for the hidden costs of unhealthy food.

Michal Mlynár, Acting Executive Director, UN Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat), underlined interlinkages between urbanization and food systems, especially in intermediary cities that act as nodes to connect people and socio-economic activities across rural and urban territories.

Lead discussant Meena Pokhrel, Nepal Agriculture Co-operative Central Federation, representing the Farmers Major Group, called for, among others, an open, fair, and rules-based global trading system that provides farmers with stable market access. Lead discussant Stefanos Fotiou, Director, SDG Office, Food and Agriculture Organization of the UN, called for sustainable natural resource management through, for instance, geospatial targeting to reduce food loss.

In the subsequent discussion, many delegates highlighted national and sub-national programmes to eliminate hunger and transform food systems, including school feeding programmes, integrated nutrition and health policies, and agro-entrepreneurship. While some showcased progress in areas such as “whole-of-food” systems and agroecology, recurring themes were the lack of access to finance, credit, and capacity.

Delegates further identified measures that could bring the world closer to achieving this SDG, highlighting:

- a shift to agroecology and plant-rich diets, and crop diversification to more resilient foods;
- elimination of distortive subsidies that promote exploitation of workers; and
- strengthened value chains, scaled-up regenerative agricultural practices, and bolstered social protections.

On the link between conflict and food insecurity, delegates emphasized that hunger cannot be eradicated in a silo. They called for increased global solidarity and partnerships to strengthen the resilience of food systems. Delegates also underlined the role of digital transformation and research, as well as the need to engage with civil society, especially at the local level, to address food challenges.

In closing remarks, Moderator Khan underlined that financing and investment towards building nutrition resilience is key.

**SDG 13 and Interlinkages with Other SDGs – Climate Action:** Opening this session on [Wednesday 10 July](#), ECOSOC Vice-President Ladeb noted the adoption of the 2030 Agenda and the Paris Agreement in 2015 had established a strong foundation for coherent implementation of climate action and sustainable development.

Heather Page, Statistics Division, UN DESA, introduced key points from the UN Secretary-General’s 2024 SDG Report, including that current national policies set the world on track for 3°C warming. Tatiana Molcean, Executive Secretary, UN Economic

Commission for Europe (ECE), described how urgent action on climate change can positively impact other SDGs, including on water, poverty, energy, and employment.

Katherine Calvin, Chief Scientist, US National Aeronautics and Space Administration, and Co-Chair, Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) Working Group III, drew insights from the IPCC's Sixth Assessment Report. She highlighted, among others, the need for the energy, transport, and industry sectors to halve their emissions by 2030, and the availability of multiple low-cost solutions.

Introducing the panel discussion, Moderator Britt Groosman, Vice President, Climate-Smart Agriculture, Environmental Defense Fund, noted the world has set several temperature records while making no significant progress on SDG 13 targets. She emphasized the need for decoupling economic growth from the carbon economy to achieve progress on other SDGs.

Axel Schmidt Graef, Mayor of Niterói, Brazil, underscored the critical role of cities in addressing climate action, and described his city's investments in the resilience of informal settlements and disaster prevention. Maria Mähl, Partner and Head, USA ESG Solutions, ESG Book, observed that the potential of financial markets to influence corporate decarbonization remains unfulfilled. She called for enhanced diagnostics for corporate disclosure protocols.

Lead discussant Miquel Muñoz Cabré, Senior Scientist, Stockholm Environment Institute US, challenged participants to commit to a just transition, ensuring that climate adaptation and mitigation actions benefit vulnerable groups. Lead discussant Faisal Alfadl, Secretary General, Saudi Green Building Forum, emphasized that access to data and multi-partner collaboration are crucial for decarbonizing the built environment.

In the subsequent discussion, delegates highlighted the growing impact of climate-related disasters across the world and shared national and regional initiatives designed to boost climate action. They called for urgent action and emphasized the need to:

- adopt ambitious disaster risk reduction strategies and maximize synergies while minimizing trade-offs;
- increase finance and coordinated action for vulnerable regions;
- address high interest rates and capital costs, fossil fuel subsidies, and debt servicing;
- prioritize climate-smart infrastructure and social protection measures;
- create an enabling environment for green investments; and
- develop reliable global carbon emissions trading systems.

Many delegates underlined that limited finance and capacity are key challenges for many countries and called for increased international cooperation. The need to develop innovative means of finance in addition to public finance was further highlighted. Other issues noted in the discussions were the role of civil society, cities, and municipalities, as well as the need for developing countries to design their own just transition pathways.

**SDG 16 and Interlinkages with Other SDGs – Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions:** On [Thursday, 11 July](#), Ivan Simonović, ECOSOC Vice-President (Croatia), chaired this session, underscoring that SDG 16 is fundamental for achieving all SDGs. Delegates were invited to examine the multiple and systemic ways in which peace, justice and institutional factors frame and influence the realization of other SDGs and the delivery of the 2030 Agenda. Daniel Eshetie, Statistics Division, UN DESA, outlined key

messages pertaining to SDG 16 from the UN Secretary-General's 2024 SDG Report, including that corruption continues to undermine and divert resources from sustainable development, and the number of forcibly displaced people has doubled since 2015, reaching an unprecedented 120 million as of May 2024.

Surya Deva, UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Development, alongside several delegates during the ensuing discussion, called for reforming the UN Security Council, including the permanent representation and veto power. George Tarr, UN High Commissioner for Refugees Youth Representative, urged for refugees to be directly included in peacebuilding efforts and dialogue processes.

In subsequent discussions, many emphasized that sustainable peace requires equality and participation, and advocated for the “youth, peace, and security” agenda; independent media outlets; and respect for human rights and the rule of law. Speakers highlighted the role of technology and AI in strengthening transparency, service provision, and tackling online crimes.

Several delegates addressed the serious and multidimensional impacts on their countries and regions due to persistent conflicts and instability, sharing experiences of citizens' resilience in the face of these threats. Others outlined steps being taken away from insecurity, including through institutional and political reform, and regional peace negotiations. Many expressed concern about the exponential rise of military spending globally.

Discussions further addressed:

- the role of localizing the SDGs in fostering peaceful and inclusive societies;
- the need to develop a fit-for-purpose international financial architecture;
- inequalities in different countries' path towards the SDGs;
- the international community's shared responsibility in addressing threats undermining security and wellbeing, including drug trafficking; and
- threats to environmental and human rights defenders.

### **Special Panels**

#### **Science, technology and innovation: Triggering transformation and sustaining science-driven solutions:**

Introducing this session on [Monday, 8 July](#), ECOSOC President and Chair Paula Narváez said discussions would build on the outcomes of the Ninth Multistakeholder Forum on Science, Technology, and Innovation (STI Forum) and related UN initiatives.

In a keynote statement, Christina Markus Lassen, Permanent Representative of Denmark to the UN, and Co-Chair, 2024 STI Forum, said the Forum showcased practical and scalable solutions from young innovators, notably the world's first off-grid milk pasteurizer, and a portable air pollution detector.

Opening an interactive panel discussion, Inga Rhonda King, Co-Chair, 2024 STI Forum, invited speakers to identify strategies to accelerate deployment of such solutions. Carlos Henrique Brito Cruz, Senior Vice-President, Research Networks, Elsevier, said increased investment in scientific collaboration and capacities in the global South are creating “a new geography of research” on the SDGs.

Joyeeta Gupta, Professor, University of Amsterdam and IHE Delft Institute for Water Education, stressed the importance of multistakeholder collaboration to ensure that social and environmental costs are fully internalized in SDG programmes, including through redirecting fossil fuel subsidies for a just energy

transition. Subho Mukherjee, Vice President and Global Head of Sustainability, Nokia, underscored the role of cross-border innovation and collaboration in bridging digital divides, especially in rural and remote settings.

Lead discussant Magdalena Stoeva, International Union for Physical and Engineering Sciences in Medicine, and Science and Technology Major Group, noted that while scientific collaboration can help address complex sustainability challenges, human development and planetary resilience must be placed back at the center.

In the subsequent discussion, delegates shared examples of national and multilateral STI initiatives, highlighted the role of statistics and evidence-based decision-making, and called for increased resource mobilization. Many delegates also called for increased governance around AI, with several speakers stressing the need to tackle misinformation and discrimination.

**Small Island Developing States (SIDS): Implementing the Outcomes of the Fourth SIDS Conference (SIDS 4):** On [Wednesday, 10 July](#), ECOSOC Vice-President Simonović chaired this segment on next steps in implementing the [Antigua and Barbuda Agenda for SIDS: A Renewed Declaration for Resilient Prosperity \(ABAS\)](#), adopted at SIDS 4 in May 2024. The Declaration defines actions in ten thematic areas, including economic resilience, climate action, disaster risk reduction, data, science, and digitalization. Gaston Browne, Prime Minister, Antigua and Barbuda, described how, in the wake of SIDS 4, the Caribbean had been devastated by Hurricane Beryl, the earliest-forming Category 5 hurricane on record during any season in the Atlantic.

Naomi Matapta, Prime Minister of Samoa, said Hurricane Beryl had reduced seemingly prosperous islands into unimaginable hardship. She noted that ABAS enshrines a collective commitment to ensure that the smallest and most vulnerable are not left behind in a world of want, injustice, and conflict, and urged international financial institutions and UN funds and agencies to mainstream SIDS priorities.

Li Junhua, Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs, and Secretary-General, SIDS 4, expressed heartfelt solidarity with the people of the Caribbean. Delivering key messages from SIDS 4, he warned that SIDS are at a critical juncture in their ongoing battle with sea-level rise, accessing development finance, and living with unsustainable debt.

Introducing the panel, moderator Ali Naseer Mohamed, Permanent Representative of Maldives to the UN, urged a focus on practical action on ABAS rather than more “wish lists.” Rabab Fatima, High Representative for the Least Developed Countries (LDCs), Landlocked Developing Countries (LLDCs), and SIDS (UN-OHRLLS), and Special Adviser, SIDS 4, said the destruction caused by Hurricane Beryl underscores the need for urgency and coordinated action across the UN System. Among other actions, she called for: integrating ABAS commitments into the strategic priorities and plans of respective UN entities; developing a robust monitoring and evaluation framework; strengthening SIDS national focal points; and providing sustainable, innovative, and targeted financing that considers SIDS’ vulnerabilities.

Natalia Kanem, Executive Director, UN Population Fund, highlighted her agency’s support for integrated programming and high-quality geospatial data to identify who is most vulnerable, and enable outcome monitoring. Salsiah Alisjahbana, ESCAP, outlined some policy priorities in ABAS implementation, including: support

for the long-term resilience of coastal ecosystems; promoting healthy lifestyles and preventive healthcare due to a rise in non-communicable diseases; investing in sustainable livelihoods; and enhancing island connectivity.

During the discussion, many delegates expressed solidarity with those affected by Hurricane Beryl. Several affected countries called for international support for official development assistance and concessional development financing. One speaker urged adequate provision and mobilization of all means of implementation to support ABAS and the development of its monitoring and evaluation framework.

**Transformation From the Ground Up: Acting at the Local Level:** ECOSOC Vice-President Rae chaired this panel discussion on [Wednesday, 10 July](#), which focused on local and regional-level actions to accelerate implementation of the SDGs. Moderator Emilia Saiz, Secretary General, United Cities and Local Governments, stressed poverty must be addressed at the local level, and marginalized communities must have the opportunity to participate in discussions that affect their future.

Bandiougou Diawara, President, Regional Council of Kayes, Mali, urged states to give more priority and attention to local authorities, underlining the local level is where action to implement the SDGs happens. Tatiana Molcean, ECE, noted voluntary local reviews (VLRs) have proven to be a powerful tool for addressing inequalities, as they not only fill data gaps but also influence local development plans and budgets in line with SDG frameworks. She drew attention to the Cities Summit of the Future scheduled for September 2024.

Lead discussant Cielito Perez, Executive Director, Center for Women’s Resources, the Philippines, urged supporting innovative grassroots actions and solutions provided by marginalized communities. Lead discussant Bernd Vöhringer, Vice-President, Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe, highlighted the European Charter of Local Self-Government as an example of instruments and tools that give local authorities “a real place at the table.”

In the ensuing general discussion, one speaker noted the success of the SDGs hinges on the active engagement and participation of local communities. Others noted that SDG localization implies a bottom-up approach, with calls for policy coherence to meet the top-down efforts of global action.

A representative of the LGBTI Stakeholder Group decried discriminatory national policies that further marginalize and endanger LGBTI+ communities, and called for decriminalizing same-sex relations to enable these communities to safely take on their roles in achieving the 2030 Agenda. Moderator Saiz encouraged delegates to build capacity for self-representation by local government actors in global-level policy development, including during the 2024 Summit of the Future.

**Introduction of the Report on the 10-year Framework of Programmes on Sustainable Consumption and Production Patterns:** On [Thursday, 11 July](#), ECOSOC Vice-President Simonović introduced consideration of the UN Secretary-General’s Progress report on the 10YFP ([E/2024/59](#)). He explained that while SDG 12 on sustainable consumption and production (SCP) is not under review at this HLPF session, it is an important enabler for other SDGs.

Annika Lindblom, Director, International and EU Affairs, Ministry of the Environment, Finland, and Co-Chair, 10YFP Board,



explained that the universal Framework is designed to accelerate a shift at national, regional, and global levels, with strong links to SDG 8 on decent work and economic growth. She noted the 2024 Global Resources Outlook has indicated it is possible to reduce resource use while improving wellbeing and reducing environmental impacts. She called for more research on circularity, and announced that UN-Habitat and UN Environment Programme (UNEP) will host the One Planet Network Forum in September 2024.

Chol Ajongo, Permanent Representative of South Sudan to UNEP and UN-Habitat, and Co-Chair, 10YFP Board, described links between SCP and climate action, and highlighted the development of a toolbox to support countries' integration of circularity into their nationally determined contributions (NDCs).

**African Countries, Least Developed Countries, and Landlocked Developing Countries: Building Resilience and Capacity in Times of Crises and Transition:** This segment on [Thursday, 11 July](#), considered African countries, LDCs, and LLDCs, which face unique challenges in their pursuit of sustainable development. Delegates addressed these countries' particular vulnerabilities to external shocks, such as economic crises, climate change, and public health emergencies.

In her opening remarks, Chair Narváez invited speakers to focus on concrete recommendations and action points for accelerating SDG progress in these countries. Introducing the panel, Moderator Kamal Kishore, Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General for Disaster Risk Reduction, and Head, UN Office for Disaster Risk Reduction, said these groups of countries are disproportionately impacted by climate change and natural disasters, while also facing severe barriers to trade and other economic opportunities.

Rabab Fatima, UN-OHRLS, and Secretary-General, third UN Conference on Land Locked Developing Countries (LLDC 3), welcomed the completion of the third LLDC Programme of Action, noting it contains a practical roadmap to strengthen food security, climate resilience, and freedom of transit. Josefa Leonel Correia Sacko, Commissioner for Agriculture, Rural Development, Blue Economy and Sustainable Environment, African Union Commission, urged significant investments in social protection and human capital, disaster preparedness, and operationalization of the Fund for addressing loss and damage.

Ibrahim Elbadawi, Managing Director, Economic Research Forum for the Arab World, Iran and Türkiye, and former Minister of Finance, Sudan, said resolving the debt crisis, peacekeeping, and addressing high costs of transit in landlocked countries are key priorities. Claver Gatete, Executive Secretary, UN Economic Commission for Africa, urged focus on, among others: countries' capacity to anticipate and withstand crises; innovation for long-term productivity; climate-proofing infrastructure; integrating humanitarian and development support; and investing in digitalization and access to clean energy.

Lead discussant Saoudata Aboubacrine, Head, Tin Hinan Sahel, Burkina Faso, called on the international community to end its "timorous and inadequate" solidarity and honor commitments to implement the SDGs. Many delegates highlighted the impact of unfair global trade terms, declining fiscal space, geopolitical dynamics, and other challenges that undermine SDG progress. The link between multiple cascading crises and mass displacement, was noted, with calls for a paradigm shift in international cooperation. Saudi Arabia and China highlighted their commitment to South-South and triangular cooperation.

**Middle-Income Countries: Overcoming Barriers in Achieving the SDGs:** This panel on [Thursday, 11 July](#), addressed countries in the middle-income category—currently 108 in number—that, together, account for around 30% of global GDP, 75% of the world's population, and nearly two-thirds of people experiencing acute multidimensional poverty. As Chair, ECOSOC President Narváez, noted the heavy burden placed on MICs by the confluence of growing sovereign debt burdens and limited fiscal space. Panel moderator Omar Hilale, Permanent Representative of Morocco to the UN, and Chair, Like-Minded Group of Countries Supporters of MICs, underlined that GDP-based classifications result in obstacles to countries' qualification and access to international cooperation, finance, and technical assistance.

José Manuel Salazar-Xirinachs, ECLAC, noted broad acknowledgement of the need for reforms to overcome the "middle-income trap," calling for transformative action to restructure the international financial architecture. Nurgul Dzhanavaeva, President, Forum of Women's Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), Kyrgyzstan, outlined several strategies to overcome MIC-specific barriers, including enhanced policy coherence and human-rights based approaches. Somik Lall, Senior Adviser to the Chief Economist, World Bank, highlighted multi-step pathways towards accelerating investment and infusing global technologies domestically, and fostering innovation. He called on advanced economies to scale back protectionism to facilitate technology sharing.

Lead discussant Sude Balaban, Global Co Lab Network, Türkiye, underlined the multidimensional chains holding youth back, calling for international support to enable her generation to scale up immediate actions for sustainable development. Two ministerial respondents opened general discussions. Hugo Allan García, Vice Minister for Strategic Analysis for Development, National Planning Ministry, Guatemala, underscored the need for greater funding opportunities that consider the diverse nature of MICs. Eduardo Punay, Undersecretary, Department of Social Welfare and Development, the Philippines, urged a system-wide response that considers metrics beyond GDP.

Many delegates underscored the insufficiency of GDP as a measure of countries' development, with several calling for multidimensional indicators.

**Perspectives from Major Groups and Other Stakeholders:** On [Friday, 12 July](#), Major Groups and Other Stakeholders (MGoS) led a morning segment that showcased experiences and proposals from the 21 self-organized stakeholder groups on accelerating implementation of the 2030 Agenda while leaving no one behind. Opening the session, Chair Narváez noted that [UNGA resolution 67/290](#) on the organization of the HLPF ensures the rights of civil society organizations (CSOs) to participate and make submissions, and called on the forthcoming Summit of the Future to support their meaningful participation

Maritza Chan-Valverde, Permanent Representative of Costa Rica to the UN, concurred, recalling that the UN Charter's reference to "we the peoples," is a reminder that the UN is not exclusively an organization of states. She described several initiatives promoting enhanced civil society inclusion, notably the #UNMute initiative, and the creation of a civil society action day and a Special Envoy to ensure "more seats at the table."

Moderator Oliver Henman, Co-Chair, MGoS Coordination Mechanism, and Frances Zainoeddin, UN Focal Point, Stakeholder Group on Ageing, traced the evolution of MGoS engagement in UN sustainable development processes, starting with the first Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, in 1992.

Four panelists representing MGoS constituencies offered diverse perspectives. Paul Divakar, Founder, the Inclusivity Project, urged continued focus on institutionalized forms of discrimination and solidarity with migrants, modern slave communities, and others that are still falling through the cracks. Rey Asis, Asia Pacific Mission for Migrants, underlined challenges with language, digital, and other divides. Caroline Rucuh, Executive Director, Western Kenya LBQT Feminist Forum, described the resilience of LGBTI+ networks in Kenya as “a beacon of hope.” Amina Bouayach, Secretary, Global Alliance of National Human Rights Institutions, noted that, at this halfway point on the path to 2030 Agenda implementation, the most challenging work still lies ahead.

In the ensuing discussion, many delegates emphasized civil society’s critical role in meaningful engagement, participation, and collaboration on policy development, implementation, and holding governments accountable. Several underlined the MGoS self-organizing approach at a time of shrinking civic space, with one delegate commending their role in peacebuilding and safeguarding freedom of expression. Subsequent discussions underscored, among other issues:

- the importance of distinguishing between attendance at meetings and meaningful participation;
- maintaining a focus on hidden and systemic forms of discrimination that persist today, particularly for migrants, modern slave communities, and other groups that continue to fall through the cracks;
- the need to empower young people as important catalysts of change; and
- the need to confront the fundamental injustice of the current international financing architecture—including the massive funding for wars and conflict—in a world where half the population is denied their basic human rights.

Many pointed out that despite hard-won gains, civil society spaces continue to shrink globally, which requires continuous and sustained multistakeholder efforts to drive reforms for more inclusive and transparent multilateral processes.

Closing the session, Chair Narváez underlined that “diversity is our strength, rather than our weakness.”

### *Voluntary National Reviews*

**Friday, 12 July:** On [Friday](#), the first ten countries presented their VNRs. Palau, Belize, Mauritania, Eritrea, and Syria presented their second report, while Georgia, Kenya, Chad, Zimbabwe, and Samoa were presenting for the third time.

**GEORGIA:** Lasha Darsalia, First Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs, Georgia, highlighted efforts to localize the SDGs, improve access to education and development of human capital, and support vulnerable groups through targeted social programmes. Responding to questions, Darsalia emphasized that ongoing Russian Federation control of Georgian territories has hindered his country’s full implementation of the SDGs. He further noted the introduction of housing and education programmes to support internally displaced persons and Ukrainian refugees.

**KENYA:** Monica Asuna, Director of Planning, National Treasury, Kenya, noted mixed SDG performance during the reporting period, with progress on SDG 2 (zero hunger) of particular concern. She highlighted a range of social protection measures, such as affirmative funds for women, youth, the informal sector, and other marginalized groups. Responding to questions on the inclusivity of the VNR process and efforts to leave no one behind, Asuna noted close collaboration with the Kenya SDG Forum, a civil society platform.

**PALAU:** Gaafar Uherbelau, Minister of Health and Human Services, Palau, highlighted several achievements in the review process, including: collecting data on 115 SDG targets, 30% of which are on track to be achieved by 2030; improved access to education through online learning centers for rural schools, and sustainable management of 100% of Palau’s marine and 20% of its terrestrial areas. In response to questions, Uherbelau underscored the whole-of-government and -society approach taken to prepare the VNR and acknowledged the struggles of young people to preserve their cultural heritage in the face of globalization, climate change, and migration.

**BELIZE:** Orlando Habet, Minister of Sustainable Development and Climate Change, Belize, said the 2024 VNR was a comprehensive multistakeholder effort that reviewed 85 SDG indicators. Among key results, he noted a sharp fall in unemployment; recognition of Indigenous Peoples and other marginalized groups; efforts to restore nearly 6% of the country’s deforested land; and improvements in digitalization and data-driven decision making. Welcoming several statements of solidarity, Habet urged the international community to fulfil climate financing and other pledges.

**CHAD:** Fatima Haram Acyl, Delegated Minister in charge of the Economy and Planning, Chad, outlined efforts made to enhance peace and security, and poverty eradication, stating the country’s new constitution provides a framework for broad-based public sector reform and multistakeholder efforts to support vulnerable groups, including refugees. Responding to questions, she reported that broad-based consultations took place to develop the new SDG-aligned national development plan, which has also received support from diverse development partners.

**MAURITANIA:** Abdessalam Ould Mohamed Saleh, Minister of Economy and Sustainable Development, Mauritania, pointed to the country’s success in, among other areas: doubling social expenditure; integrating climate action and poverty reduction strategies; increasing renewable energy investments; integrating internally displaced persons and refugees; and combating terrorism. Elaborating on the country’s social cohesion policy, Saleh stressed that “there is no single political prisoner in Mauritania today.”

**ZIMBABWE:** July Moyo, Minister of Public Service, Labour, and Social Welfare, Zimbabwe, identified key successes, including increased food security, life expectancy, and primary school completion rates, and the establishment of a national adaptation plan with strategies to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. He highlighted some innovations to enhance multistakeholder engagement in the VNR process, including the integration of VLRs and a children-led VNR. Responding to questions, he outlined strategies to increase crop self-sufficiency and integrate informal sectors into the economy.



**ERITREA:** Sophia Tasfamariam, Permanent Representative of Eritrea to the UN, identified some notable areas of progress, including: free education from primary to tertiary levels, with hundreds of new schools and libraries constructed; adoption of progressive and affirmative action measures to enhance women's rights, and reduction of harmful traditional practices such as female genital mutilation; and improved access to water, sanitation and hygiene, with 93% of villages nationwide as open defecation free. Responding to questions, Tasfamariam underlined social capital as her country's most valuable and important driver of progress, despite the imposition of unilateral coercive measures.

**SAMOA:** Fatumanava-o-Upolu III Pa'olelei Luteru, Permanent Representative of Samoa to the UN, described improved data collection, a strengthened social protection framework, and context-sensitive SDG priority setting as highlights of the VNR process. He noted potential to draw on traditional knowledge, such as storytelling, to fill gaps in SDG monitoring data. Responding to delegates' questions, Luteru noted opportunities to strengthen regional partnerships for the SDGs under the new ABAS framework.

**SYRIA:** Koussay Aldahhak, Permanent Representative of Syria to the UN, noted slow progress due to ongoing conflict, stating the country aims to enhance efforts to localize the SDGs and promote the rule of law. Responding to questions, Aldahhak underlined politicization as the main cross-cutting challenge affecting sustainable development, citing reduced energy facility capacity due to sanctions, and calling for an end to collective punishment.

**Monday, 15 July:** A second set of seven countries presented their VNRs on [Monday](#). Uganda, Spain, Peru, Lao People's Democratic Republic (PDR), Armenia, and Nepal presented their third VNR reports, while Azerbaijan presented for the fourth time.

**UGANDA:** Robinah Nabbanja, Prime Minister of Uganda, highlighted the development of the current SDG-aligned five-year strategic plan, as well as initiatives to strengthen national statistics systems and localize the SDGs. Responding to questions, she highlighted progress on: climate early-warning systems and restoration of wetlands; enhanced domestic resource mobilization; and prioritization of agro-industrialization programmes to bolster food systems.

**SPAIN:** A four-member team led by Teresa Ribera Rodriguez, Third Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for the Ecological Transition and the Demographic Challenge, presented the report. Among key SDG gains, they highlighted progress in reducing inequalities through "a new social contract" to tackle child poverty and other structural inequalities. Other highlights were: efforts to ensure a just energy transition by identifying potential risks for the most vulnerable; strengthening multi-level SDG coalitions; and the establishment of a joint permanent parliamentary commission as a non-legislative and multistakeholder space for debate, coordination, and follow-through on SDG implementation.

**PERU:** Diego Belevan, Deputy Permanent Representative of Peru to the UN, pointed to data improvements, with 51% of the global UN SDG dataset included in the current review. He said this helped confirm notable progress on water and sanitation access, as well as affordable energy targets. Responding to questions, Belevan conceded that poverty eradication among marginalized communities remains one of the foremost challenges, and highlighted efforts to transition to a multidimensional poverty index to enhance alignment across the SDGs.

**LAO PDR:** Saleumxay Kommasith, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lao PDR, highlighted positive trends on 11 SDGs, while noting regression on peace and security (SDG 16), as well as partnerships for the Goals (SDG 17). He reported that the country had adopted an 18th SDG on unexploded ordnances to focus on these gaps. He further highlighted the country's "smooth transition" strategy to align his country's expected graduation to middle-income status with the SDGs.

**AZERBAIJAN:** Sahib Mammadov, Deputy Minister of Economy, Azerbaijan, noted the proliferation of land mines in the country has led to the adoption of a national 18th SDG on demining, and called on other mine-affected countries to support this initiative. Among notable SDG advances, he mentioned improvements in national statistical indicators, leveraging diverse funding sources for the SDGs based on a "SDG investment map," and fostering global dialogue for enhanced climate action as host of the 2024 UN Climate Conference.

**ARMENIA:** Ararat Mirzoyan, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Armenia, focused on the nexus between humanitarian, development, and peace actions as a core theme in his country's VNR. He noted that the establishment of a social emergency support system had led to decreased unemployment rates, also highlighting initiatives to form an inter-agency coordination council to measure progress towards the Paris Agreement. Among peace building efforts, Mirzoyan underscored Armenia's goal of normalizing relations with Azerbaijan and Türkiye.

**NEPAL:** Lok Bahadur Thapa, Permanent Representative of Nepal to the UN, outlined progress made in advancing social inclusion and access to healthcare and education, while noting slower progress in tackling hunger and climate change mitigation, overcoming financial dependencies, and poor institutional capacities. Responding to questions, Thapa pointed to increasing financial pressures due to Nepal's debt-to-GDP ratio, and stressed the importance of generating disaggregated data, as data "has the power to guide or misguide" public policies.

**Tuesday, 16 July:** A third set of nine countries presented their VNRs on [Tuesday](#). South Sudan and Yemen presented their inaugural VNRs, Guinea, Libya, and the Solomon Islands presented for the second time; Honduras and Costa Rica presented their third reports; while Colombia and Sierra Leone were fourth-time presenters.

**SOUTH SUDAN:** Augustino Ting Mayai, Chair, National Bureau of Statistics, South Sudan, outlined the VNR's difficult context in a country still transitioning from long-term conflict, reporting limited progress overall, with some bright spots in maternal mortality and child vaccination rates, adult literacy, and gender parity. He said the revised national development strategy, Vision 2040, aimed to drive institutional improvements and ensure proper resource management, helping to set the stage for increased SDG investments. Responding to questions, Mayai said that available oil resources will be channeled towards agriculture to increase food security.

**YEMEN:** Waed Abdullah Badhib, Minister of Planning and International Cooperation, Yemen, underlined persistent challenges arising from the ongoing conflict, noting it has channeled the labor force away from the agriculture and fisheries sectors towards frontline sectors. He identified declining public revenue, increased corruption, internal displacement, poverty, and food insecurity

as key concerns, outlining ongoing efforts to, *inter alia*: rebuild physical and digital infrastructure; strengthen statistical and legislative capacities; and address external debt.

**COLOMBIA:** Alexander López, Director of National Planning, Colombia, reported that his country has made progress on 58% of the SDGs, while noting persistent challenges in closing inequality gaps. He further highlighted ongoing peace efforts and agriculture reforms to formalize territorial agreements, noting 2023 had the lowest rate of deforestation in the last 20 years. Responding to questions, Lopez highlighted establishment of government-civil society dialogues for each sector of government; and the transition to using a multidimensional indicator of poverty.

**GUINEA:** Ismael Nabe, Minister of Planning and International Cooperation, Guinea, outlined progress in: reducing food insecurity and chronic child malnutrition; promoting the rule of law and equal access to justice; and tackling gender-based violence. Responding to questions, he outlined the importance of civil society in the VNR process and urged the international community to support the preservation of critical water resources that directly impact other countries in the region.

**LIBYA:** Mohamed Al-Zaidani, Minister of Planning, Libya, highlighted a number of positive trends, including: provision of basic incomes to vulnerable groups; reducing maternal and infant mortality rates; increasing access to safe drinking water; and combating illegal fishing. Responding to questions, Al-Zaidani stressed that CSOs played a key role in the VNR process, and highlighted regulations that ensure CSOs' independence. He further outlined anti-corruption regulations to increase financial oversight.

**HONDURAS:** Eduardo Enrique Reina Garcia, Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, Honduras, underlined the new government's "historic commitment" to build a socialist democratic state that fosters human rights. Among planned structural changes, the Vice Minister for Planning enumerated investing in cash transfers and other social protection measures, boosting agricultural production, and introducing a universal school feeding programme. Responding to questions, he highlighted plans to scale up social transfers to Indigenous and Afro-descendant communities, among other marginalized groups.

**SIERRA LEONE:** Kenyah Barlay, Minister of Planning and Economic Development, discussed the SDG acceleration roadmap aligned to the "Big Five Game Changers" national planning framework, noting progress on: women's leadership; reducing gender-based violence; social protection; and local civil society engagement. On lessons learned from previous reviews, she noted the importance of a timely start to the VNR process, and mobilizing sufficient resources and capacities for robust data gathering and analysis.

**SOLOMON ISLANDS:** Rexon Ramofafia, Minister, National Planning and Development, Solomon Islands, noted steady, albeit uneven, progress on the five SDGs under review in 2024. He identified ongoing crises as key barriers, with access to energy, water, and sanitation remaining beyond the reach of many citizens. Responding to questions, Ramofafia stressed that structural challenges due to the islands' geography hinder connectivity, transport, and basic service provision, and noted planned relocation guidelines for disaster-affected communities.

**COSTA RICA:** Maritza Chan Valverde, Permanent Representative of Costa Rica to the UN, reported good progress in 59% of indicators, with notable progress on poverty reduction,

energy, and industrialization. She further highlighted the relaunch of the National Pact for the Advancement of the SDGs, and enhanced SDG localization through the SDG Cantons Network. Responding to questions, Valverde cited the 2025 UN Ocean Conference, to be co-hosted with France, as an example of blue diplomacy, and underlined her commitment to "build more bridges" by strengthening participatory processes.

**Wednesday, 17 July:** The final set of VNR presentations featured 10 countries. Austria, Equatorial Guinea, Mauritius, Congo, Oman, Brazil, and Vanuatu presented their second reviews. Ecuador and Namibia presented for the third time, and Mexico presented their fourth VNR report. The morning session was chaired by ECOSOC Vice-Presidents Ladeb and Rae. The afternoon segment was chaired by ECOSOC President Narváez.

**AUSTRIA:** Karoline Edstadler, Minister of the EU and Constitution at the Federal Chancellery, Austria, presented her country's second VNR report, emphasizing its comprehensive approach undertaken over a 15-month period, with significant advances in "process and product" from the previous review. Among highlights, she mentioned:

- strong collaboration with scientific communities and civil society, and inclusion of 120 "concrete" success stories;
- a focus on transformations needed to accelerate SDG progress, notably: social inclusion and cohesion; labor market skills upgrading; and accelerated action to achieve carbon neutrality by 2040; and
- peer exchanges with Switzerland and Bhutan.

Franz Fehr, University of Natural Resources and Life Sciences, Vienna, discussed the UniNetZ - Universities and SDGs interdisciplinary initiative, noting a key output was developing proposals and specific recommendations on future policy options.

Responding to issues raised by BHUTAN, SWITZERLAND, and the MAJOR GROUP FOR CHILDREN AND YOUTH, Edstadler said her country used established stakeholder representation mechanisms, such as the Federal Youth Council, to solicit broad input, and stressed her continued commitment to promote such dialogue in the future. On data gaps, she conceded that despite the integration of diverse data sources, issues remain, especially around gender pay gaps. Outlining some lessons learned from scientific collaboration, Fehr remarked that the biggest challenge was not coordinating inputs from diverse stakeholders, but organizing the scientific community itself. Concluding that "what you measure is what you get," he stressed the need to address real challenges and to translate scientific recommendations into practical messages to drive action.

**EQUATORIAL GUINEA:** Gabriel Mbaga Obiang Lima, Minister, Planning and Economic Diversification, Equatorial Guinea, presented his country's second VNR report. He highlighted initiatives to diversify the economy, strengthen public policies and finances, and develop tools to monitor and report on the SDGs through a national committee for SDG coordination. Obiang Lima noted challenges in making progress on education and social welfare. He further pointed to efforts underway for increasing food security and access to healthcare, including by opening a hospital in each provincial capital.

Following questions from the CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC and the AFRICA REGIONAL MECHANISM OF MGoS, Obiang Lima stressed his country's efforts for economic diversification and a transition away from over-reliance on fossil fuel exports.

He pointed to workshops held to facilitate consultations with civil society, NGOs, and vulnerable groups, noting efforts to further integrate these groups in formulating Equatorial Guinea's national sustainable development commitments.

**MAURITIUS:** Purmanund Jhugroo, Ambassador of Mauritius to the US, presented his country's second VNR report, noting that despite the impact of COVID-19 and related global crises, the country's economy "bounced back" in 2023 and 2024. He attributed this to, among other policy measures: a progressive tax regime; investments in education and social protection; a focus on sustainable agriculture, renewable energy, and the blue economy; and a proactive approach to climate adaptation and disaster risk reduction. He noted that 35% of the projected USD 6.5 billion needed for the country's revised NDC will be raised through domestic resource mobilization, underscoring the need for additional international financing and capacity building. He further highlighted the adoption of a national environmental masterplan in 2022 with a roadmap for transitioning to a circular economy.

Responding to AUSTRALIA, CANADA, and the PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES STAKEHOLDER GROUP, Jhugroo said the country has adopted a whole-of-society approach akin to a "Marshall Plan against poverty." He noted, among other priorities: subsidies for basic needs; women's empowerment and skills upgrading programmes; and special financial transfers to enhance young people's access to digital tools and training. On climate action, he called for increased international support to build long-term resilience, noting that the upcoming Summit of the Future, 2024 UN Climate Change Conference, and the Fourth International Conference on Financing for Development will be key moments for generating political momentum.

**CONGO:** Ingrid Olga Ghislaine Ebouka-Babackas, Minister of Planning, Statistics and Regional Integration, Congo, presented her country's second VNR report. She noted the development of national and local development plans, and a new economic resilience plan to support Congo in the context of international geopolitical tensions. Ebouka-Babackas highlighted her country's focus on three SDGs considered to have immediate and multiplying effects on others, namely SDGs 8, 9 and 11. She outlined high access to public transport networks; slow progress on increasing the value of manufacturing industries; and exponential growth in the value of mobile money transactions.

In response to questions from SWITZERLAND, the MAJOR GROUP FOR CHILDREN AND YOUTH, and CHAD, Ebouka-Babackas highlighted Congo had recently hosted the Three Basins Summit and the first International Conference on Afforestation and Reforestation. She emphasized that combating climate change and forest management requires greater resources and participation from the international community. She further noted efforts and initiatives to: improve governance before elections take place in 2026; address challenges faced by youth within the national development plan; and strengthen capacity for data collection and statistics generation.

**ECUADOR:** Sariha Moya, National Planning Secretary, Ecuador, presented her country's third VNR report. She said the review covered 158 SDG indicators, the bulk of which drew on disaggregated data, and confirmed progress on reducing multidimensional poverty and hunger due to expansion of social protection programmes, as well as subsidies for small-scale farmers. She further highlighted the use of machine learning to review the

SDGs under focus and their interlinkages, as well as the adoption of a UNDP framework to identify high impact initiatives.

Responding to questions from BRAZIL, COSTA RICA, the NGOs MAJOR GROUP, and PERU, Moya said a key innovation was the participatory approach taken to link the VNR to broader national planning processes. She highlighted: specific workshops with different stakeholder groups, including the Citizen's Assembly; gathering gender and geographically disaggregated data; and data partnerships with UN agencies. She noted while overall poverty has fallen, targeted interventions are needed to address marginalized groups and achieve land tenure security, especially for women. Moya further acknowledged that the fight against crime is a long-term one, requiring broad partnerships at all levels.

**NAMIBIA:** Sylvester Mbangi, Chief National Development Advisor, National Planning Commission, presented his country's third VNR report. He outlined numerous successes including:

- securing foreign direct investments and creation of a sovereign wealth fund to accelerate renewable energy projects, especially on green hydrogen;
- channeling 50% of the national budget to social sectors;
- achieving HIV/AIDS targets; and
- effective management of all 20 national conservation areas.

He said Namibia had been recognized as the second-best governed country in Africa, and was ranked among the top nine nations in the global gender gap report.

Responding to questions from UGANDA, the TRADE UNIONS MAJOR GROUP, and BRAZIL, Mbangi outlined the close alignment between the SDGs and national development planning processes; improvements in data collection; and achieving co-benefits across SDGs due to targeted measures such as a focus on the most vulnerable. Acknowledging that economic growth has not translated into jobs, he noted the need for economic diversification, reducing inequalities, and further transforming education to meet labor sector needs.

**OMAN:** Said Mohammed Al Saqri, Minister of Economy, Oman, presented his country's second VNR. He reported that over one-quarter of public spending is allocated to basic service provision, including healthcare and education. Al Saqri highlighted efforts towards implementing an integrated social protection system for vulnerable groups, and facilitating the inclusion of people with disabilities, through rehabilitation and training programmes. He further reported the launch of several national strategies, including on: climate mitigation and adaptation; carbon neutrality; mangrove reforestation; and accelerating the digital transition.

Following questions from BANGLADESH, SAUDI ARABIA, the EDUCATION AND ACADEMIA MAJOR GROUP, SINGAPORE, MOROCCO, and SWITZERLAND, the Oman VNR team noted: developments in legislation to guarantee women's right to work; establishment of a platform to monitor progress towards the SDGs; increased investment in food security; and efforts to decentralize administrations. The team further outlined the launch of a social protection fund that targets the most vulnerable groups.

**BRAZIL:** Márcio Macedo, Minister, General Secretariat of the Presidency, Brazil, presented his country's second VNR report. He pointed to renewed efforts to strengthen public policies and institutions that were weakened during Brazil's previous administration. Macedo outlined the establishment of a national commission for the SDGs and programmes to reduce inequality through a new fiscal framework and tax reform. He highlighted that



deforestation in the Amazon was immediately halved following the change in government, and outlined initiatives for: tackling food insecurity through a “solidarity kitchen” programme; strengthening the public healthcare system; and reducing racial inequality.

Following questions from GERMANY, MEXICO, FINLAND, the NGOs MAJOR GROUP, EGYPT, and URUGUAY, Macedo outlined efforts to undertake participatory planning for sustainable development and to align development strategies with the 2030 Agenda. He called on the international community to contribute to the shared responsibility for achieving the SDGs, and stressed that Brazil’s 18th SDG on racial equality addresses a cross-cutting issue.

**MEXICO:** Raquel Buenrostro Sánchez, Minister of Economy, Mexico, presented her country’s fourth VNR report. She pointed to over 35 VLRs produced by local governments, emphasizing the whole-of-society approach to sustainable development. Buenrostro reported recent progress on the SDGs, including: doubling the minimum wage; providing decent pensions; and lifting five million people out of extreme poverty.

Alejandro Encinas Nájera, Vice-Minister of Foreign Trade, Ministry of the Economy, Mexico, responded to questions from BRAZIL, SWITZERLAND, the VOLUNTEERS MAJOR GROUP, and the UK. He reported: a significant increase in public spending on social services; progress made on reforestation; and initiatives to address root causes of migration. Encinas highlighted programmes to address inequalities in rural areas, increase food security, and promote entrepreneurship.

**VANUATU:** Odo Tevi, Permanent Representative of Vanuatu to the UN, presented his country’s second VNR report, describing Vanuatu’s SDG story as one of resilience to a series of extreme events. He highlighted public sector reforms, including at the local level, and social protection programmes building on traditional support systems as important developments. Tevi also noted gains in access to, and improved quality of education, as well as efforts to climate-proof programmes in the agriculture, natural resources management, and marine sectors.

Responding to questions from FINLAND, the NGOs MAJOR GROUP and FIJI, Tevi highlighted data as a key challenge, noting that ongoing efforts to align national and local development planning processes to the SDGs will also help generate more data. He remarked that compounding disasters have become “the new normal,” and stressed that efforts to integrate disaster risk reduction in national development plans will require multistakeholder engagement, and strengthening international partnerships.

### **Ministerial Segment**

#### **“From the SDG Summit to the Summit of the Future”:**

**General Debate:** The Ministerial Segment’s general debate began on [Monday, 15 July](#), with [12 statements](#) by coalitions of countries and various groups, and [43 high-level officials](#) speaking for individual countries. Spokespersons expressed commitment towards meeting the 2030 Agenda, and highlighted challenges and pathways looking ahead to the Summit of the Future in September 2024. Many countries highlighted national initiatives already underway alongside future developments for implementing the SDGs.

Recurring themes included calls for: reform of the international finance architecture; regional cooperation on disaster risk reduction; operationalizing the Loss and Damage Fund; debt alleviation to enable LDCs to focus public spending on sustainable development

needs; targeting root causes of intergenerational cycles of poverty and conflict; and for the Summit of the Future to reinvigorate multilateral cooperation.

On [Tuesday, 16 July](#), the high-level general debate continued with [34 statements](#) by high-level government officials. Several stressed that the multilateral system is at an inflection point, underlining the intersection of crises of foreign occupation, terrorism, war crimes, and genocide alongside demands for international action on the triple planetary crisis and the SDGs. Calls were made for renewed commitment to: protect vulnerable and marginalized groups; the SDG Stimulus Plan; gender equality; restoration of trust; and the protection of human rights and the rule of law. The debate further emphasized the role of localization as a way of bridging local realities with the global agenda.

The final segment of the high-level debate took place on Wednesday, 17 July. There were 38 [statements](#) from Ministers, Vice-Ministers, Permanent Representatives to the UN, and their deputies, and from 31 civil society and professional organizations.

Numerous countries commented on ongoing geopolitical conflicts, including: occupation; internal displacement; a resurgence of unilateralism and xenophobia; the weaponization of access to food during conflicts; war crimes and impunity; unprecedented numbers requiring humanitarian support; and a debt crisis, with over three billion people living in countries that spend more each year in servicing debt than on health and education. Some argued that the 2030 Agenda can only be realized with fairness in a new world order, when gaps between the global North and South are addressed. One delegate said he could not address the future without calling attention to the denial of the rights of the Palestinian people. Another called for greater representation of women in high-level positions within the UN system.

A number of statements underlined the role that the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs can play in providing a timely response to geopolitical, economic, and ecological challenges, noting their inherent linkages with peace, the rule of law, and human rights. Specific calls were made for the Summit of the Future to “future proof” the SDGs. Some countries called for reinvigorated multilateralism and partnerships that transcend borders and ideologies.

Several speakers explained how the triple planetary crisis is being compounded by conflict and weaknesses in the multilateral system. Some noted that the world is at a crossroads between an option to embrace rules-based multilateralism, cooperation, solidarity, and empathy, or to continue with business-as-usual. One speaker emphasized that no country should have to choose between tackling poverty and saving the planet.

Addressing the interdependence of the SDGs, one official called for investment in global public goods that “know no borders,” cautioning that the world must move beyond the delusion that problems impacting one group do not impact others. Some countries welcomed national ownership of the Goals and their incorporation into national development plans in collaboration with civil society partners.

On the Summit of the Future, one country suggested that it could be used to send a strong political signal on the need to reform multilateral institutions, including those working on financing development; and contribute to a restoration of trust and a strong compact, referencing the UN Charter’s onus on “We the peoples.”

On gender, countries reported on their feminist foreign policy approaches; called for a gender lens on financing development; and highlighted the positive contribution of women's participation in peace processes and democratic institutions. Regarding AI, some welcomed its potential contribution while cautioning the possible risks.

Some urged a focus on children and the UN Declaration on the Rights of the Child, calling for their meaningful participation in deliberations on sustainable development to, among others, reveal their exposure to violence. Others underlined the importance of reforming the multilateral financial architecture, including the implementation and integration of the Addis Ababa Action Agenda into the UN cooperation framework, the Global Gateway Initiative. Several welcomed the UN Multidimensional Vulnerability Index and called for the delivery of climate financing commitments.

MGoS representatives raised issues, including:

- access for those living with disabilities to sustainable development deliberations;
- land grabs in Africa and their impact on food security;
- protection of labor rights from discrimination; and
- role of philosophy and virtue in cultivating “ethical voluntarism.”

A youth delegate spoke of her possible responses to the triple planetary crisis, stating that she could respond with apathy and fear—or with action, “if countries light a path ahead.” She called for a fair future and mainstreaming of the just transition, and asserted that the Paris Agreement goal of 1.5°C is non-negotiable.

**Messages from the UN Environment Assembly:** On [Tuesday, 16 July](#), Abdullah Bin Ali Al Amri, Chairman, Environment Authority, Oman, and President, UNEA, reminded HLPF delegates that they gather not only as Member States, “but as stewards of our planet, united by a common target to achieve the 2030 Agenda.” He underscored the vital role of healthy ecosystems in eradicating hunger and poverty and fostering more equitable societies. Al Amri highlighted UNEA's leadership in:

- spearheading multilateral action to tackle the triple planetary crisis, namely the recently adopted Global Framework on Chemicals, and negotiations towards a legally binding agreement on plastic pollution; and
- promoting the One Health approach to addressing human and planetary wellbeing.

Citing the recent UNEP preliminary assessment on the environmental impact of the conflict in Gaza, Al Amri challenged delegates to tackle the root causes of conflict: “What good is working on sustainable development if children and women are killed every day?”

**Messages from the Regions:** On [Tuesday, 16 July](#), ECOSOC President Narváez introduced this segment, and the five regional forums on sustainable development imparted messages from their 2024 meetings.

Arab states noted the need for a comprehensive reform of the multilateral system and called for legislation to address the use of technology, including AI, as a tool of war. Africa stressed the impact of debt on domestic investment, and pointed to recommendations for the Summit of the Future to enhance the international financial architecture.

Europe outlined opportunities to advance information technology, youth engagement, and climate awareness, and for the Summit of the Future to enhance the involvement of municipalities and regions. Latin America and the Caribbean called for increased investment in social protection and for economic opportunities at the global and

regional levels, reporting recommendations for the international community to strengthen measures on biodiversity, disaster risk reduction, and youth participation.

The discussion highlighted recommendations for: policy coherence for SDG implementation; targeted support for connectivity, financing, and debt management; reforming the international financial architecture and G20 Common Framework for Debt Treatments; investment in decent and green job creation; and developing solutions adapted to local and regional realities and needs.

### **Closing Plenary**

**Ministerial Declaration:** Merete Fjeld Brattested, Permanent Representative of Norway to the UN, and Co-Facilitator of the negotiations on the Ministerial Declaration, noted the Co-Facilitators “have done our utmost” to facilitate a transparent and inclusive process and expressed regret at the late submission of amendments by some delegations. Co-Facilitator José Blanco, Permanent Representative of the Dominican Republic to the UN, noted delegates had engaged in a “frank exchange,” which had led to the draft Declaration, and that the text strikes a delicate balance between varying interests.

ECOSOC President Narváez noted the draft Declaration has no programme budget implications, and invited Nicaragua to present a proposed amendment (E/HLPF/2024/L.3).

NICARAGUA, also speaking on behalf of BELARUS, BOLIVIA, CUBA, ERITREA, IRAN, the RUSSIAN FEDERATION, SYRIA, VENEZUELA, and ZIMBABWE, stressed more than 40 countries are suffering from the negative impacts of “unilateral coercive measures” that hinder the sustainable development aspirations of developing countries. Urging the HLPF not to continue to overlook the realities of these impacts, such as lack of access to medicines and medical equipment, he encouraged delegates to vote in favor of the amendment. The DEMOCRATIC PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF KOREA, SOUTH AFRICA, and TANZANIA joined as co-sponsors of the amendment.

Responding to a question by VENEZUELA, Narváez clarified that the US and UK requested a vote.

The UK lamented the late introduction of the amendment, and stressed it jeopardizes months of negotiations on the text of the Declaration. He noted that the 2030 Agenda is a “carefully negotiated balance,” and opposed efforts to “cherry pick” its elements. The UK said autonomous sanctions support the fundamental purposes of the UN Charter and ensure compliance with human rights, adding that his country ensures these are always accompanied with arrangements to deliver humanitarian assistance.

Some of the co-sponsors of the amendment then took the floor to express and explain their support for the amendment. SOUTH AFRICA further rejected the EU's Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM), saying it is a trade-distorting mechanism disguised as climate action.

The amendment was then put to a vote with 105 voting in favor, 11 voting against, and 46 abstaining. Following the vote, the EU dissociated from the adopted amendment. Noting he had abstained from voting “on principle,” he expressed regret at the inclusion of the “hostile amendment” submitted by a few countries and lamented the “false narrative” surrounding unilateral sanctions.

TANZANIA and CHILE reiterated that unilateral coercive measures (UCMs) flout international law.

Uganda, for the GROUP OF 77 AND CHINA, expressed disappointment at a call by Israel for a vote on the retention of a paragraph stating that sustainable development cannot be realized without peace and security, and that peace and security will be at risk without sustainable development. He explained the paragraph is text from the 2030 Agenda, and that countries in conflict and those under occupation experience specific structural issues that require targeted national support, state building, and sustainable development.

ISRAEL noted that despite the efforts of the Co-Facilitators, there was no consensus on the draft paragraph and some countries insisted on “placing narrow political considerations” ahead of a global consensus on the SDGs. She explained that her call for a vote against the retention of the paragraph aimed to discourage the politicization of the HLPF.

In the vote, 122 delegations voted for, 2 voted against, and 39 abstained. The paragraph was retained in the Ministerial Declaration. After the vote, CHILE emphasized support for the text’s retention based on the 2030 Agenda. The Declaration, as amended, (E/HLPF/2024/L.1) was adopted with no objections.

**Country Statements:** AUSTRALIA, with CANADA and NEW ZEALAND, said they had accepted the final Declaration in the spirit of compromise but considered the effort to alter the document as disruptive and an “affront to the long, hard work of the negotiations.” He expressed disappointment about other aspects of the text, including the references to gender equality that lack ambition and references to climate change that step back from commitments made at the 2023 Conference of the Parties to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC COP 28). He said delegations should be moving forward rather than “fighting over standing still,” underlining that the SDG on climate action had been under review at the HLPF.

The EU said they had accepted the consensus language as proof of their attachment to the HLPF and to follow up the SDG Summit Declaration. He added that the implementation of the 2030 Agenda was inhibited by the current international context of uncertainty, the shocks of war, and the triple planetary crisis, with particular concern about backsliding on the rule of law. He said the imperative of peace and just societies “compels us to condemn conflict and commit to international law.” He also defended the CBAM as a logical response to the risk of carbon leakage. SWITZERLAND expressed regret about the introduction of the controversial subject of sanctions and the failure of the Declaration to reflect significant decisions taken at UNFCCC COP 28.

The UK dissociated itself from the text on UCMs, and concurred with views that the Declaration rolls back on the COP 28 outcomes and on gender and unsustainable debt. IRAN said he does not commit to those elements of the Declaration that contradict his country’s national priorities, laws, and regulations. JAPAN noted deep divergences during the informal negotiations on the Ministerial Declaration and expressed concerns about the text on UCMs.

ISRAEL dissociated from the Declaration’s paragraphs on the full implementation of the Political Declaration of the SDG Summit and on the interlinkage of peace and justice with sustainable development. HUNGARY expressed a reservation to a draft paragraph mentioning the positive role of migrants.

Welcoming the adoption of the Ministerial Declaration, COLOMBIA highlighted references to biodiversity and pollution, and underlined that peace and justice are relevant to the entire UN

system. He cautioned that delegations need to ensure that gender equality is achieved in practice as a cross-cutting approach to all the SDGs.

ARGENTINA expressed commitment to the individual rights of all humans with no exceptions, in line with international agreements.

Lamenting the “hijacking” of negotiations to advance “narrow political ends,” the US stressed sanctions are legitimate and in accordance with international law when applied to address “malign” behavior. She dissociated from the adopted amendment. She also denounced the retained paragraph as an “inappropriate attempt to politicize the work of the HLPF.”

**Closure of the Meeting:** Delegates adopted the draft report of the meeting (E/HLPF/2024/L.2), while authorizing President Narváez to finalize it.

In his closing statement, Under-Secretary-General Li underlined that the SDGs continue to inspire, unite, and mobilize efforts worldwide, noting the 2030 Agenda remains the only blueprint to advance sustainable development.

President Narváez stressed the HLPF is fulfilling its mission to assess progress, share lessons learned, and discuss priorities. She identified the thematic reviews as having provided examples of success that can be replicated, and noted they demonstrate the multidimensional nature of the SDGs, together with opportunities to strengthen the links between them. Emphasizing HLPF 2024 has demonstrated it is “not too late to make sustainable development a reality,” Narváez gavelled the Forum to a close at 6:10 pm.

### **Ministerial Declaration**

The 2024 Ministerial Declaration identifies the current situation and challenges, alongside future actions and investment pathways needed to reinforce the 2030 Agenda and deliver on the SDGs.

On the current challenges and situation to achieve implementation of the SDGs, the Declaration:

- strongly reaffirms a commitment to building a sustainable, peaceful, just, and inclusive world by 2030 and to act with urgency, leaving no one behind;
- reaffirms that eradicating poverty is the greatest challenge; and
- reaffirms that there can be no sustainable development without peace and no peace without sustainable development and, in this regard, expresses grave concern at the increased and ongoing conflicts in the world.

On the long-term impacts of COVID-19, continued poverty, widening inequalities, and interlinked crises of climate change, biodiversity loss, pollution, and forced displacement, the Declaration: recommits to the full implementation of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030; and calls for new and additional means of implementation to close the biodiversity financing gap and effectively implement at the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework.

This section of the Declaration also reiterates that Member States are strongly urged to refrain from promulgating and applying any unilateral economic, financial, or trade measures not in accordance with international law and the UN Charter that impede the full achievement of economic and social development, particularly in developing countries.

Regarding actions and investment pathways to support the 2030 Agenda, accelerate poverty eradication, and achieve the SDGs, the Declaration calls for:

- full implementation of the political declaration adopted at the 2023 SDG Summit;



- recognition that sustainable development cannot be realized without peace and security, and peace and security will be at risk without sustainable development;
- asserting that factors giving rise to violence, insecurity and injustice, such as inequality, corruption, poor governance and illicit financial and arms flows, are addressed in the 2030 Agenda, and recommit to redoubling efforts to resolve or prevent conflict and support post-conflict countries, including ensuring women have a role in peacebuilding and state-building; and
- removing obstacles to the full realization of the right to self-determination of peoples living under colonial and foreign occupation.

The Declaration further commits Ministers and representatives to:

- cooperate internationally to ensure safe, orderly, and regular migration involving full respect for human rights;
- affirm that the global fight against racism and related intolerance is a priority for the international community, and recognize the special challenges of African countries, LDCs, LLDCs, and SIDs; and
- address ongoing financing gaps for achieving the SDGs.

The Declaration contains further sections dedicated to the SDGs under in-depth review at HLPF 2024.

On eradicating poverty in all its forms everywhere (SDG 1), Ministers and high-level representatives commit to:

- mobilizing the necessary means of implementation;
- fostering sustainable, inclusive, and sustained economic growth;
- eradicating forced labor and human trafficking; and
- acknowledging the mutually reinforcing links between the achievement of gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls and the eradication of poverty.

On ending hunger, achieving food security and improved nutrition, and promoting sustainable agriculture (SDG 2), Ministers and high-level representatives commit to, among others:

- support the integration of each country, in particular developing countries, into the global agri-food supply chain;
- achieve global food security; and
- pursue efficient, resilient, and sustainable agri-food systems.

On taking urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts (SDG 13), Ministers and high-level representatives, commit to, *inter alia*:

- recognize the urgency of enhancing ambition for climate action in implementing the UNFCCC and the Paris Agreement; and
- operationalize climate change funding arrangements.

Regarding promoting peaceful, inclusive societies for sustainable development, providing access to justice for all, and building effective, accountable, and inclusive institutions for all (SDG 16), Ministers and high-level representatives commit to:

- recognize the importance of good governance and strong institutions as key enablers of sustainable development;
- prevent and combat illicit financial flows;
- invest in conflict prevention, including attention to structural causes and strategies for promoting peace, justice, and the rule of law; and
- acknowledge that current global efforts to prevent and resolve conflicts and address inequality have been fragmented and insufficient.

On strengthening the means of implementation and revitalizing the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development (SDG 17), Ministers and high-level representatives commit to:

- recognize the urgency of providing affordable, predictable, sustainable, and sufficient development finance to developing countries;
- address the urgent need for developed countries to scale up and fulfil official development assistance commitments;
- inter-governmental discussions on international financial architecture reform;
- improve international debt mechanisms, with expansion of support for vulnerable countries; and
- bridge the digital divide and spread the benefits of digitalization.

On VNRs and other priority issues, the Ministerial Declaration encourages all countries to use key findings and share locally-driven development approaches and pathways to accelerate their actions to implement the 2030 Agenda. It encourages the full, equal, and meaningful participation of all relevant stakeholders in the VNR process.

### A Brief Analysis of HLPF 2024

*“Hope deferred makes the heart sick, but a desire fulfilled is a tree of life.” – Proverbs 13:12*

Once upon a time at the UN—in 2015 to be precise—the world pinned its hopes on 2030 as a decisive moment in global sustainable development politics. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) provide a blueprint for ensuring peace and prosperity with a bold undertaking that no one would be left behind.

Hot on the heels of the 2023 SDG Summit and a sobering assessment of progress by the UN Secretary-General, the 2024 meeting of the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF) confirmed what many already knew or suspected—only 17% of the SDGs’ 169 targets are on track to be achieved, nearly half are showing minimal or moderate progress, and progress on over a third has stalled or even regressed. There are echoes here of another global ambition established in 2015, the Paris Agreement’s goal to keep global warming below 1.5°C, which is also receding over the horizon.

As many observed, the 2015 world in which these agreements were struck has changed decisively in ways that call for more than a ritual acknowledgement of the deep interlinkages between understandings of peace, security, and human development. Today’s calls for new ambition question whether the multilateral institutions themselves—together with their current mandates and forms of representation that hark back to an earlier moment in geopolitical fortunes—can hold and service the ambitions of the 2030 Agenda and beyond.

In this light, this brief analysis reflects on HLPF 2024, and the hope placed in the UN at a time of fracturing multilateralism to move the needle on the many economic, social, and environmental issues plaguing the world. Drawing lessons from the HLPF, the analysis will examine if there is any guidance about the prospects for the Summit of the Future in September, which has become the latest repository for the UN’s seemingly incurable hope that “we the peoples” will—even now—deliver on the promises made to “leave no one behind.”

### *Multilateralism in a Fractured World*

One major cause for alarm—as demonstrated by dissenting voices in the closing plenary—is the increasing fracturing of the multilateral system itself. The HLPF essentially has two functions:

the first, an experience-sharing exercise or peer review, and the second, producing a high-level declaration intended to drive progress towards the 2030 Agenda. On the surface, it appears the HLPF is doing both things poorly. The experience-sharing debates are less true dialogues and more one-sided discussions, and the Ministerial Declarations do not seem to have much impact. The lack of consensus on this HLPF's Ministerial Declaration—despite a long negotiation process spanning more than 20 consultative sessions in advance of the HLPF—highlighted how conflicts and other global crises are further eroding countries' ability to work together towards a shared set of objectives.

Since its inception, the HLPF has had a difficult time adopting its Ministerial Declaration by consensus, as political divisions overtake any sense of unity on the 2030 Agenda. During this year's closing plenary, these divisions manifested in two votes: one on a proposed amendment on the impact of unilateral coercive measures (economic sanctions) on poverty and food security, and the second about retaining language that acknowledges the impact of violence, insecurity, and injustice on sustainable development. These debates served to highlight ways in which the larger geopolitical fractures bear down on the HLPF in a manner that only serves to expose its lack of authority to address such issues definitively.

What should be a core understanding of “sustainable development” as the mirror image of a world invested in geopolitical divisions, xenophobia, and record levels of spending on arms, became a matter of dispute in the dying moments of HLPF 2024. Observers noted that the Secretary General's Summit of the Future could not come soon enough while, simultaneously, harboring questions about the ability of the Summit to rise to the occasion.

Yet, these fractures and differences were not the entire story at the HLPF. The session undertook in-depth reviews of five SDGs: 1 (no poverty), 2 (zero hunger), 13 (climate action), 16 (peace, justice and strong institutions), and 17 (partnerships for the Goals). These in-depth reviews, combined with the Voluntary National Review (VNR) reports and the extensive debate that followed, clearly reaffirmed that countries are striving for progress, even if it is slower than desired. Delegates heard reports of war, the suffering of children, and fundamental criticisms of the institutions that once promised accountability and the rule of law, in a world that is rushing headlong to beat records for global arms expenditure while largely in denial about its failure to protect and cherish the most vulnerable. Surya Deva, UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Development, captured the moment for many when he drew a line—in his call to action—between human rights, accountability of companies profiting from conflict, and reform of the UN Security Council to address permanent representation and veto powers.

Yet, these reviews, and the special sessions held over the eight days, also showcased action at the municipal, local, and regional levels, notably driven with the collaboration of non-state actors. This suggested to some that the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs have taken on a life of their own, and are tapping into the hearts and minds of “we the peoples.”

The positive spirit exhibited during the annual presentation of VNRs by 36 countries was in marked contrast to the fractious closing debate. Carefully prepared by a “Friends of VNRs” group, each country's presentation received critical responses from both government and non-governmental delegates, creating a real moment of honest exchange and learning. The VNR labs taking place on the sidelines of the meeting offered further opportunity for

joint reflection, exchange of best practice, and building partnerships to further advance SDG implementation.

For example, civil society representatives from Honduras and Mexico established new connections with their governments—both in their capitals and at the HLPF—in the course of their challenging engagements on the design, preparation, and content of the VNRs. In the case of Mexico, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs even issued a public apology in response to challenges over their failure to adequately consult with the hundreds of civil society organizations signed up to Mexico's focal point. Similarly, after the Honduran VNR, an engagement by civil society actors with the government representatives led directly to plans for follow-up meetings with government representatives back in Tegucigalpa.

As such, all hope is not lost. As Michelle Bachelet, former President of Chile and former UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, put it, “Change is also happening fast, improving the lives of many.” The overarching message of the VNR presentations was that, despite many challenges, on the frontlines of SDG implementation differences are being set aside and multi-stakeholder partnerships taking hold to impact “real lives.”

The fractures that nonetheless spilled onto the floor of the closing plenary cannot be ignored, however, and seemed to offer an early taste of things to come at the Summit of the Future, when issues of peace, security, and multilateral institutional reform will be tackled head on.

### ***Surely there Remains a Future: A Vision for Reform and Transformation***

One of the most sophisticated forms of denial is our capacity to defer the future on the altar of the present. Originally called for in the UN Secretary-General's “Our Common Agenda” report, the Summit of the Future has been described as a “once-in-a-generation opportunity to reinvigorate global action, recommit to fundamental principles, and further develop the frameworks of multilateralism so they are fit for the future.” It is expected to be both retrospective and forward looking: retrospective with a view to finding ways to accelerate achievement of the SDGs, and forward looking to address the fractured multilateral system and make it “fit for the future.” There was much talk of dimensions of the SDGs as “enablers” and catalysts for transformative change. It has become clear that the decisive enablers—in all probability—lie outside the scope of the immediate competence of the HLPF and the 2030 Agenda, and reside in the UN General Assembly mandate for the Summit of the Future.

One of the objectives of HLPF 2024 was to contribute to the preparations for the Summit, particularly to enable sharing of the priorities and expectations for the Summit. Consequently, the general debate was on the theme “From the SDG Summit to the Summit of the Future,” and even outside the general debate, delegates shared their high expectations for the Summit. One of the most recurrent calls during HLPF 2024 was to use the upcoming Summit as an opportunity to consider a reform of the international financial architecture, including the multilateral development banks, given the high levels of indebtedness being experienced by most developing countries. Demands about finance and the democratization of the global financial institutions—including calls for more participation by women and youth—are far reaching and will be decisive in demonstrating a shift towards the new multipolar world that has not yet found expression in such institutions. With

some developing countries reportedly spending more on debt servicing than on basic services such as healthcare and education, this focus is not surprising.

Others consider the Summit an opportunity to “future proof” the SDGs and 2030 Agenda, given that the poor performance experienced thus far will leave much to be done post-2030. As Indonesia pointed out during the general debate, considering the future post-2030 is as important as remaining steadfast in achieving the 2030 Goals. And, arguably, the most important outcome the Summit could achieve is reinvigorating multilateralism by reforming the UN system.

However, some delegates, especially civil society, were less optimistic, suggesting this Summit will simply be a replay of previous summits, with thousands flying in from around the world to read prepared statements and then return to their home countries where nothing changes.

The Summit is a reminder that 2030 is not an end in itself, but perhaps an opportunity to demonstrate a milestone along the way to a more equal world. Calls to use the Summit as an opportunity to “future proof” the SDGs may not be misplaced if there is a sufficient recognition that much of the energy behind the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs is now coming from the bottom-up, from an unleashing of civic engagement that sometimes—perhaps often—exceeds the ambitions of governments and multilateral organizations.

### ***Moving Forward Because We Have No Choice***

*“At the end of the day, we must go forward with hope and not backward by fear and division.” – Jesse Jackson*

Major Groups and other Stakeholders are not beholden to the fate of multilateralism for their vision and their ambition. In many ways they preceded the UN’s uptake of the planetary predicaments that now populate the official documents of UN processes and Ministerial Declarations. One of the key lessons that seem to have come out of HLPF 2024 is the need to return to a people-centered vision of the UN’s mission, from which governments derive a courageous new mandate to challenge—with and on behalf of their constituencies—the interests that come between them and the future.

In a number of standout interventions, youth representatives and other stakeholders—joined by the delegation from Costa Rica—reminded delegates of the language of “we the peoples” in the UN Charter. They called on countries to recall that the UN was not exclusively an organization of governments. In the decades that have followed the first Earth Summit in particular, the UN has embraced a more complex and participatory model of deliberation. One delegate captured some of the wisdom that resides in the corners of all UN processes that seek to address societal and planetary transformation, in the words of Amartya Sen: “What moves us, reasonably enough, is not the realization that the world falls short of being completely just—which few of us expect—but that there are clearly remediable injustices around us which we want to eliminate.”

As the HLPF’s Ministerial segment opened on Monday, 15 July, delegates were treated to a recital of two pieces of music by the tenor Jonathan Tetelman. His first piece, “E Lucevan Le Stelle,” raises our eyes to the stars while keeping our senses entangled in the Earth: “*How the stars used to shine there, How sweet the earth smelled.*” His second piece, “No puede ser” is about a refusal, “*It can’t be, No way.*” This musical interlude may have set the stage in more ways than one. In this respect, the HLPF delegates and

civil society constituencies are suspended between soaring, Earthly ambition, but are always faced with a sense that they have fallen short.

But isn’t that the human condition? What keeps us going is that there are clearly remediable injustices around us that we want to eliminate and, provided we keep moving forward, there remains hope for a better future.

## **Upcoming Meetings**

**Fifth Global Climate and SDG Synergy Conference:** The Conference, co-convened by the UNFCCC Secretariat, aims to develop recommendations on enhancing synergistic implementation of the SDGs and climate action. **dates:** 5-6 September 2024 **location:** Rio de Janeiro, Brazil **www:** [sdgs.un.org/climate-sdgs-synergies](https://sdgs.un.org/climate-sdgs-synergies)

**The 12th International Conference on Sustainable Development (ICSD):** Convening on the theme, “Solutions for the Future,” the conference will bring together individuals from research, policy, practice, and business in advance of the 2024 Summit of the Future to share practice solutions for achieving the SDGs at local and national levels. The conference is co-organized by the Global Master’s in Development Practice and the Sustainable Development Solutions Network, with support from UNDP, the European Commission, and other partners. **dates:** 19-20 September 2024 **location:** New York City, US and online **www:** [ic-sd.org](https://ic-sd.org)

**Global Goals Week 2024:** Global Goals Week is an annual week of action, awareness, and accountability for the SDGs, with partners across civil society, business, academia, and the UN system coming together to accelerate action on the SDGs, especially during the UN General Assembly’s High-level Week. It is also an opportunity to speak out as one voice and share ideas and transformative solutions in the fight to recover better from global challenges. **dates:** 20-29 September 2024 **location:** New York City, US **www:** [globalgoalsweek.org](https://globalgoalsweek.org)

**Summit of the Future:** The high-level event will bring together UN Member States, UN agencies, NGOs, civil society organizations, academic institutions, the private sector, and youth under the theme, “Summit of the Future: Multilateral Solutions for a Better Tomorrow.” The Summit aims to forge a new global consensus on what our future should look like, and what we can do today to secure it. **dates:** 23-24 September 2024 **location:** UN Headquarters, New York **www:** [un.org/en/summit-of-the-future](https://un.org/en/summit-of-the-future)

**Fourth Forum of Mayors – “The Cities Summit of the Future”:** This event aims to contribute to the Summit of the Future process by emphasizing the crucial role of cities and local actors in leading the way towards a brighter and more sustainable future for all. **dates:** 30 September - 1 October 2024 **location:** Geneva, Switzerland **www:** [forumofmayors.unece.org](https://forumofmayors.unece.org)

**First Global Nature Positive Summit:** This event aims to bring together: climate, environment, and finance ministers; private sector leaders; Indigenous groups, scientists, and academics; and community leaders to drive private sector investment to protect and repair the environment. The Summit aims to inform the design of nature-positive activities. Hosted by the Government of Australia and the Government of New South Wales, the Summit will also share guidance for investors and project developers to encourage partnerships for developing country projects. **dates:** 8-10 October 2024 **location:** Sydney, Australia **www:** [dcceew.gov.au/environment/international/nature-positive-summit](https://dcceew.gov.au/environment/international/nature-positive-summit)



**UN Biodiversity Conference 2024 (CBD COP 16):** The 16th meeting of the Conference of the Parties (COP) to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), will convene alongside the 11th Meeting of the Conference of the Parties serving as the Meeting of the Parties (MOP) to the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety (CP-MOP-11) and the fifth MOP to the Nagoya Protocol on Access to Genetic Resources and the Fair and Equitable Sharing of the Benefits Arising from their Utilization (NP-MOP-5). **dates:** 21 October – 1 November 2024 **location:** Cali, Colombia **www:** [cbd.int/meetings](http://cbd.int/meetings)

**2024 UN Climate Change Conference (UNFCCC COP 29):** This event will include the 29th session of the Conference of the Parties (COP 29), the 19th meeting of the COP serving as the Meeting of the Parties to the Kyoto Protocol (CMP 19), and the sixth meeting of the COP serving as the Meeting of the Parties to the Paris Agreement (CMA 6) that will convene to complete the first enhanced transparency framework and the new collective quantified goal on finance, among other matters. The 61st sessions of the Subsidiary Body for Scientific and Technological Advice (SBSTA 61) and the Subsidiary Body for Implementation (SBI 61) will also meet. **dates:** 11-22 November 2024 **location:** Baku, Azerbaijan **www:** [unfccc.int/cop29](http://unfccc.int/cop29)

**Fifth UN World Data Forum 2024:** The aim of the Forum is to spur data innovation, nurture partnerships, mobilize high-level political and financial support for data, and build a pathway to better data for sustainable development. The event is organized with support from the Statistics Division of the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs. **dates:** 12-15 November 2024 **location:** Medellín, Colombia **www:** [unstats.un.org/unsd/undataforum/](http://unstats.un.org/unsd/undataforum/)

**G20 Brazil Summit 2024:** Marking the conclusion of the work carried out by the country holding the group's rotating presidency, this annual event provides an opportunity for Heads of State and Government to approve the agreements negotiated throughout the year and point out ways of dealing with global challenges. The Summit will bring together leaders of the 19 member countries, together with the African Union and the European Union. **dates:** 18-19 November 2024 **location:** Rio de Janeiro, Brazil **www:** [g20.org/en/about-the-g20/summit-rio-2024](http://g20.org/en/about-the-g20/summit-rio-2024)

**UNCCD COP 16:** The sixteenth session of the Conference of the Parties (COP16) to the UN Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) will commemorate the 30th anniversary of the Convention under the overarching theme "Our land, our future." The twenty-second session of the Committee for the Review of the Implementation of the Convention (CRIC22) and the sixteenth session of the Committee on Science and Technology (CST16) to the UNCCD will also take place. **dates:** 2-13 December 2024 **location:** Riyadh, Saudi Arabia **www:** [unccd.int/cop16](http://unccd.int/cop16)

**Third UN Conference on Landlocked Developing Countries:** Held every 10 years, the LLDC conferences provide a platform to explore innovative solutions, strategic partnerships, and increased investments to address hurdles in trade, connectivity, and development, and unlock the full potential of these nations. The conference will build on regional preparatory meetings in 2023 for Africa, Latin America, Asia, and Europe, and will convene dedicated sessions parliamentary, civil society, and youth forums, as well as a high-level event. **dates:** 9-13 December 2024 **location:** Gaborone, Botswana **www:** [un.org/en/landlocked](http://un.org/en/landlocked)

For additional upcoming events, see [sdg.iisd.org](http://sdg.iisd.org)

## Glossary

ABAS	Antigua and Barbuda Agenda for SIDS
CSOs	Civil society organizations
ECE	UN Economic Commission for Europe
ECLAC	UN Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean
ECOSOC	UN Economic and Social Council
ESCAP	UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific
ESCWA	UN Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia
GDP	Gross domestic product
HLPF	High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development
LDCs	Least developed countries
LLDCs	Landlocked developing countries
MGoS	Major Groups and other Stakeholders
MICs	Middle-income countries
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SIDS	Small island developing states
STI	Science, technology, and innovation
UN DESA	UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs
UNDP	UN Development Programme
UNEA	UN Environment Assembly
UNEP	UN Environment Programme
UNFCCC	UN Framework Convention on Climate Change
UNGA	UN General Assembly
UN-Habitat	UN Human Settlements Programme
VLR	Voluntary Local Review
VNR	Voluntary National Review