

Summary of the 2025 Session of the High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development: 14-23 July 2025

Despite convening against a backdrop of enormous global disruption, this is “not the time to abandon ideals, but to double down on solidarity.”

This message from Amb. Bob Rae, President of the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), and Chair of the 2025 session of the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF), encapsulated the sense of “positive realism” that permeated discussions at the Forum.

Sandwiched between the 2024 Summit of the Future and the Second World Summit on Social Development (WSSD 2), HLPF 2025 marked the start of the final five years of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Delegates were acutely aware of disheartening data from the latest [SDG Progress Report](#), which concluded that despite notable improvements on some of the SDG targets on health, energy access, social protection, and girls’ education, only 35% of the SDGs’ 169 targets are on track or making moderate progress, while nearly half are moving too slowly and 18% have regressed.

The Forum also coincided with an ongoing system-wide effort launched in May 2025 by UN Secretary-General António Guterres to streamline UN operations as part of the UN’s 80th anniversary, focusing discussions on the imperative of restoring trust in multilateralism during a period of unprecedented global challenges. It further aimed to build on momentum from recent flagship events, including the Third United Nations Ocean Conference (UNOC3), and the Fourth International Conference on Financing for Development (FfD4).

The eight-day Forum was organized around the following main segments:

- An opening “Town Hall” exploring the theme, “Unlocking means of implementation: mobilizing financing and science, technology and innovation (STI) for the SDGs”;
- In-depth reviews of five SDGs: 3 (good health and well-being); 5 (gender equality); 8 (decent work and economic growth); 14 (life below water); and 17 (partnerships for the goals).
- Presentation of 35 Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs) to enhance the sharing of good practices and lessons learned in SDG implementation;
- Special sessions to present perspectives from different SDG contexts and stakeholder groups; and
- A three-day Ministerial Segment convened under the theme, “UN@80: Catalyzing Change.”

During the closing plenary on Wednesday, 23 July, several Member States proposed amendments to sections of the Forum’s Ministerial Declaration, centering on language relating to gender equality and sexual and reproductive health and rights (SDG 5), striving towards decent employment for all (SDG 8), and ensuring access to medicines (SDG 3).

This led to several votes on both the paragraphs in question as well as, at the behest of the US, the Declaration in its entirety. Following votes rejecting all the proposed amendments, the Forum adopted the 130-paragraph Ministerial Declaration, structured around three main sections:

- an opening section titled, “Current trends, challenges, and their impacts on accelerating the implementation of the SDGs”;
- a section outlining priority actions for advancing sustainable, inclusive, science- and evidence-based solutions for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, with five sub-sections containing specific actions under review at HLPF 2025; and
- a final section on the VNRs.

While an overwhelming majority of Member States voted in favor of the negotiated text, many requested the floor to clarify their country positions, or record an intention to dissociate themselves from final language in some paragraphs of the Declaration.

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Convening under the auspices of ECOSOC, the overarching theme of HLPF 2025 was: “Advancing sustainable, inclusive, science- and evidence-based solutions for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its SDGs for leaving no one behind.”

HLPF 2025 convened from 14-23 July 2025 at UN Headquarters in New York. More than 6,000 delegates, including over 100 Ministers, attended the Forum. In addition, the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA) and partners convened a number high-profile [special events](#), [exhibitions](#), and multi-stakeholder [VNR Labs](#) to galvanize the engagement of key sectors of society around the implementation of the SDGs and follow up to the 2024 Summit of the Future. In parallel to the official programme, a broad range of stakeholders organized more than 200 [in-person](#), [offsite](#), and [virtual side events](#), providing additional opportunities to contribute to the theme of the HLPF and to the SDGs under review.

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) and 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 the 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 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 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.

2019 HLPF Session: 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 its 17 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

2020 HLPF Session: 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.

2021 HLPF Session: 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.

2022 HLPF Session: The first 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.

2023 HLPF Session: 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.”

Second SDG Summit: The second SDG Summit took place in September 2023. Marking the half-way point to the deadline for achieving the 2030 Agenda, the Summit aimed to provide renewed impetus and accelerate action. The adopted Political Declaration

opens with a statement of leaders' shared commitment. Governments reaffirm their intent to implement the 2030 Agenda and its SDGs "effectively," and note that the Agenda remains the "overarching roadmap" not only for achieving sustainable development but also for overcoming multiple current crises.

2024 HLPF Session: Sandwiched between the 2023 SDG Summit and the 2024 Summit of the Future, HLPF 2024 placed a focus on sustaining SDG momentum in the face of accelerating and intersecting global crises. In addition to SDG 17, the session reviewed SDGs 1 (no poverty), 2 (zero hunger), 13 (climate action), and 16 (peaceful and inclusive societies). The Forum's Ministerial Declaration was adopted following a vote that affirmed the inclusion of language to acknowledge the impact of "unilateral coercive measures" on countries' sustainable development aspirations.

HLPF 2025 Report

Lok Bahadur Thapa, Vice-President, ECOSOC, opened the meeting on [Monday, 14 July](#). Delegates adopted the provisional agenda ([E/HLPF/2025/1](#)).

UN Deputy Secretary-General Amina Mohammed linked geopolitical conflicts, financing gaps, inequalities, and climate change that have slowed SDG progress, while pointing to progress on some targets as a reason for hope.

Via video, Anatolio Ndong Mba, Vice-President, ECOSOC, highlighted the need to maintain climate action, sustainable development, and resilience at the heart of UN reforms.

Townhall: Unlocking Means of Implementation: Mobilizing Financing and STI for the SDGs: Li Junhua, Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs, introduced the SDG progress report, stating that 35% of SDG targets are making moderate progress, whereas 18% are regressing.

Moderator Claver Gatete, Executive Secretary, UN Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), asked panelists to reflect on how technology can support SDG progress.

Noting that innovation spreads too slowly, Robert Kirkpatrick, United Cities Foundation, highlighted an open access digital twin initiative as an innovative solution, but stressed cities should ensure that such initiatives help to foster local knowledge.

Sanda Ojiambo, CEO, UN Global Compact, highlighted the catalytic role of public-private partnerships. Robbert Dijkgraaf, President-Elect, International Science Council, called for science co-designed and co-produced with local governments and communities; strengthened national science advisory systems; and a global digital compact for science as a global common good.

Discussant Emilia Reyes, Equidad de Género: Ciudadanía, Trabajo y Familia, Mexico, made a link between private investments and human rights violations, and regretted that some wealthy countries blocked ambition at FfD4. Marcia Barbosa, Universidade Federal do Rio Grande do Sul, Brazil, called for open science aligned with communities' needs.

During the interactive discussion, many speakers welcomed the [Sevilla Commitment](#) adopted at FfD4, with several speakers calling for more innovative financial mechanisms to bridge funding gaps, as well as rethinking the current financial architecture to advance transparency, equality, and mutual respect.

Other issues highlighted in the discussions included the need for:

- long-term support for STI as a catalyst for accelerated transformation;
- partnerships for scaling innovations that support vulnerable communities;
- reducing the debt burden of developing countries; and

- capacity building for artificial intelligence (AI) and AI-enabled technologies to bridge the digital divide and enhance data protection and sovereignty.

SDGs in Focus

During the first four days of the HLPF, delegates focused on thematic reviews of four SDGs. Updates on SDG 17 (partnerships for the goals), which is reviewed every year, were integrated across all the thematic SDG sessions, given its relevance for achieving all the goals.

SDG 3 and Interlinkages with other SDGs – Ensure Healthy Lives and Promote Well-being for All at All Ages: Chair Lok Bahadur Thapa, Vice-President, ECOSOC, opened this session on [Monday, 14 July](#), focusing on how to advance health targets in the context of challenges and megatrends, including climate change, biodiversity loss, pollution, unsustainable urbanization, and aging populations. He said conflict and displacement raise new questions for SDG 3 action.

Moderator Tony Holohan, University College Dublin, asked panelists to offer perspectives on how to accelerate health system transformation. Magda Robalo, Co-Chair, Universal Health Care 2030, prioritized universal health care, science and evidence, and health system reform grounded in solidarity and cooperation. Ibrahim Abubakar, University College London, urged rebalancing health investments towards equity and resilience and including vulnerable populations in co-designing health care.

Shobha Shukla, Citizen News Service, called for governments and corporations to be accountable for the harms they cause and to have people-centered and gender-inclusive policies to achieve SDG 3 targets.

In the interactive discussion, delegates shared lessons learned from domestic implementation and international cooperation, including decreases in maternal and child mortality, improved primary health care, mandatory health care, and national health insurance programmes, digitalization, and linkages to other SDGs that contribute to living conditions and societal wellbeing.

Some noted challenges such as conflict, urban pollution, and decreased health funding. Many called for domestic resource mobilization, multisectoral approaches, increased multilateral coordination, and universal and equitable health coverage.

On ways to accelerate SDG 3 implementation, delegates stressed the importance of: adopting multidisciplinary, holistic, and integrated approaches; increasing the adoption of STI, especially digital health initiatives; international cooperation and partnerships among governments and health institutions; and enhancing mindful participation to build trust between people and governments.

Summarizing the session, Robalo called for stakeholder inclusion, particularly civil society, to ensure people-focused health systems. Noting challenges mentioned by indebted countries, Abubakar suggested focusing on aid efficiency, progressive taxation, refocusing donor priorities, and responsible private sector engagement. Holohan suggested reframing health as a positive resource for society and encouraged a "passion to do things differently."

SDG 5 and Interlinkages with other SDGs – Achieve Gender Equality and Empower All Women and Girls: Chair Bob Rae opened this session on [Tuesday, 15 July](#), which discussed persistent and emerging challenges in achieving gender equality and how to overcome them.

Moderator Jan Beagle, International Development Law Organization (IDLO), emphasized that closing the gender justice

gap, particularly through action on gender-based violence, could be a gamechanger by “letting women live free from fear.” Sima Sami Bahous, UN Women, said the ongoing UN80 initiative and associated multilateral reform initiatives offer an opportunity to accelerate progress by making the UN more efficient and impactful for women and girls.

Albert Motivans, Equal Measures 2030, stressed the importance of developing value propositions to engage those working on the ground, and described the UN Development Programme (UNDP) social priority maps as useful tools for supporting mobilization across sectors.

Citing education as a major barrier in advancing gender equality, Zara Khanna, She Loves Tech, stressed access to education through AI-powered learning programmes and accelerated connectivity. Fer Ghanaa Ansari, Musawah, discussed the impact of customary and religious-based discriminatory laws that continue to harm girls and women.

In the ensuing interactive discussion, delegates stressed that gender equality is a fundamental human right.

Among persistent challenges, delegates highlighted:

- barriers to accessing education and labor markets;
- policy backtracking, especially pushback against access to sexual and reproductive health services;
- gender-based violence and harmful cultural norms and practices, such as early and forced marriage, female genital mutilation, and discriminatory laws and policies;
- lack of recognition and compensation for women’s unpaid care work; and
- disproportionate suffering of women and girls in conflicts and disasters.

Several speakers cited good returns from investing in women and girls’ education in such areas as classroom safety, teacher training, and support for health and nutrition workers.

Other progressive measures outlined included:

- targeted programmes supporting women entrepreneurs and flexible work models for women;
- providing access to digital technologies, particularly in remote areas;
- investments in the care economy; and
- enhancing women’s access to finance, especially for those in vulnerable situations, and providing debt relief to countries complying with specific gender equality targets.

SDG 8 and Interlinkages with other SDGs – Decent Work and Economic Growth: Chaired by ECOSOC Vice-President Lok Bahadur Thapa, this session on [Wednesday, 16 July](#), focused on key challenges for progress towards decent work including youth employment, informality, labor rights, and child labor. Moderator Sangheon Lee, International Labour Organization (ILO), noted causes of regression include fiscal and environmental stresses, disruptive economic transitions, and geopolitical uncertainties.

Jason Judd, Cornell University, noted a significant rise in heat stress in tropical countries that have apparel industries. He urged governments to set clear standards on workplace heat. Patrick Paul Walsh, UN Sustainable Development Solutions Network, said global supply chains promote a “race to the bottom” on environmental and social protections. He noted insurance companies can foster public-private partnerships, and green, inclusive supply chains.

Rola Dashti, UN Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA), urged governments to overcome fragmented policies on social protection through, among other measures,

efficient government spending, better tax enforcement, and innovative international financial instruments such as debt swaps.

Siobhán Vipond, International Trade Union Confederation Women’s Committee, prioritized formal care work, living wages, decent digital platform work, and reforming the international financial architecture to protect labor rights. Macarena Letelier, Confederación de la Producción y del Comercio, Chile, highlighted decent job creation by small- and medium-sized enterprises.

In a wide-ranging discussion, delegates underscored the centrality of SDG 8 for the health and wellbeing of future generations, gender equality, social stability, and leaving no one behind. Many suggested further discussions at WSSD 2. Speakers highlighted the need for reforms and policies to: transition from informal to formal employment; improve access to education and training; and promote inclusive employment.

Participants shared practical examples to address such challenges, stressing economic diversification, digital innovation, green initiatives, and labor protection as key components of development strategies. Others highlighted legal reforms and enabling policies to spur job creation, increase employment of youth and women, and strengthen educational systems.

Delegates further discussed upskilling youth, engaging stakeholders on occupational safety, supporting incubators for innovation and entrepreneurship, and fostering a just and green digital transition. Many recognized the role of the private sector and strategic partnerships in achieving these goals.

SDG 14 and interlinkages with other SDGs – Life Below Water: Chaired by Kilaparti Ramakrishna, Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution, this session on [Thursday, 17 July](#), provided an opportunity to discuss obstacles and new opportunities to advance targets on Ocean conservation, the Blue Economy, and Ocean governance. Elizabeth McLeod, The Nature Conservancy, highlighted the finance gap, fragmented governance, and failure to empower coastal communities.

Editrudith Lukanga, African Women Fish Processors and Traders Network, called for empowering small-scale fishing communities by embedding the Food and Agriculture Organization of the UN (FAO) [Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-Scale Fisheries](#) in Ocean policies and action. Charles Tellier, Deputy to the Special Envoy of France for UNOC3, outlined the need for a science-policy-society interface that can connect Ocean action to the latest data, information, and knowledge.

Sophika Kostyniuk, Aquatic Life Institute, underscored safeguarding aquatic animal welfare to avoid unnecessary suffering from wasteful and destructive fishing practices, such as bottom trawling, and reduce Ocean pollution.

During the interactive discussion, delegates noted national efforts, including expanding marine protected areas, banning single-use plastics, marine spatial planning, protecting mangrove ecosystems, and science-based tools for Ocean protection.

Several pointed to the impacts of Ocean collapse on food security and health. Many called for investment in human capacity, while others underscored the importance of traditional knowledge. Several stressed the role of traditional communities and Indigenous Peoples in protecting the Ocean, with some highlighting the importance of integrated Ocean governance and research.

Delegates also supported relevant international agreements, including the Agreement on the Conservation and Sustainable Use of Marine Biological Diversity of Areas beyond National Jurisdiction ([BBNJ Agreement](#)) under the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea

(UNCLOS), the [WTO Agreement on Fisheries Subsidies](#), and the ongoing negotiation process towards an international agreement on plastics, noting their importance for UNOC3 follow up.

Many delegates supported a precautionary moratorium on deep sea mining under UNCLOS.

Some speakers underscored that women and youth are on the front lines of Ocean-based livelihoods but are often ignored in marine policy and governance. Many stressed the need for inclusive approaches involving youth and communities to drive sustainable development.

Special Sessions

Accelerating SDG Achievement in African Countries, Least Developed Countries (LDCs), Landlocked Developing Countries (LLDCs) and Middle-Income Countries (MICs): African countries, least developed countries and landlocked developing countries: Opening the discussion on [Tuesday, 15 July 2025](#), Chair Rae outlined some unique challenges faced by this disparate group of countries, noting the need for tailored solutions.

Moderator Cristina Duarte, UN Under-Secretary-General and Special Adviser on Africa, asked panelists to offer insights on, among other questions: how to accelerate inclusive economic growth; build resilience against economic and environmental shocks; and create effective and innovative financing and partnership models to expand the shrinking fiscal space in these countries.

Rabab Fatima, Under-Secretary-General and High Representative for LDCs, LLDCs and Small Island Developing States (SIDS) and Secretary-General of the Third UN Conference on Landlocked Developing Countries (LLDC3), welcomed the recent adoption of the [Awaza Programme of Action](#), in addition to the existing [Doha Programme of Action](#), as an important mechanism to tackle entrenched challenges faced by these countries.

Nosipho Jezile, Chair, FAO Committee on World Food Security (CFS), highlighted the importance of aligning global actions, achieving greater global convergence to reshape partnerships, and ensuring the implementation of existing frameworks.

Landry Signé, Brookings Institution, emphasized that bridging the gap between policy intentions and implementation requires adequate resources. He drew attention to the role played by the private sector.

Under-Secretary-General Fatima announced the forthcoming LLDC3 conference in Awaza, Turkmenistan, noting it will advance concrete deliverables of the new LLDC Programme of Action, including establishment of a formal LLDC negotiating group.

Jezile said the CFS's normative instruments, including guidelines on the right to food, women's empowerment, and food security and climate change, all enable advancement of the SDGs. She drew attention to the second UN Food Systems Summit Stocktake in late July 2025, co-hosted by Ethiopia and Italy.

Signé underscored the role of science and technology including in such areas as enhancing AI capacity, supporting technology startups, cyber security, and enhancing human capacities and agile governance to handle challenges.

Discussant Robert Akoto Amofo, African regional chapter of the International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans, and Intersex Association (ILGA), called for transparency mechanisms and strengthened capacity for judicial and government institutions to fight corruption and counter discrimination, particularly against the LGBTI community.

In the subsequent discussion, one delegate highlighted structural disadvantages faced by LLDCs, including high trade costs due

to the lack of access to the sea, and called for enhancing political will to implement the new LLDC Plan of Action. Another stressed innovative financing partnerships alongside debt restructuring and relief. One delegate noted their support of the LDC Future Forum that convened in Zambia in April 2025, while another stressed legal support for LDCs to develop enforceable laws to attract investment.

Middle-income countries: Opening this segment on [Tuesday, 15 July 2025](#), Chair Rae noted that more than half the world's countries are classified as MICs.

Armida Salsiah Alisjahbana, Executive Secretary, Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), highlighted the adoption of comprehensive strategies, including assessments beyond GDP, reforming the international financial architecture, and enhancing South-South and triangular cooperation.

John McArthur, Director, Center for Sustainable Development, Brookings Institution, emphasized the role of digital technologies in overcoming structural barriers for sustainable growth in MICs. He stressed the need for "bigger, faster, and better investment," noting it is essential to integrate new technologies in finance.

Discussant Naveen Gautam, Global Forum of Communities Discriminated on Work and Descent, drew attention to the discrimination against marginalized groups, especially youth, faced in MICs, calling for designated funding and increased representation and participation.

In the ensuing discussion, one speaker said MICs risk losing access to concessional loans before they can access other sources of finance. Several delegates outlined development strategies, underscoring people-centered, locally grounded, and inclusive SDG implementation, long-term support, and partnerships.

Many delegates highlighted their contribution to international development partnerships. Some noted the paradox that being a MIC limits access to needed finance to bridge widening social inequalities, calling for innovative finance to overcome the middle-income trap.

Speakers also touched on: the MICs Plan of Action as a framework for South-South and triangular cooperation, prioritizing infrastructure, connectivity, and trade; the need to build resistance to climate shocks and related disasters, including through strengthening early warning systems; and enhancing multi-stakeholder partnerships to execute action-oriented strategies and leave no one behind.

Several delegates welcomed the Sevilla Commitment as an opportunity to overhaul financial support and investment for MICs. Others called for support for countries in special circumstances, while another highlighted that countries require debt relief to invest in children.

Many urged establishing metrics beyond gross domestic product (GDP) to reflect the complexities of MICs' economies and their needs. A speaker said MICs should plan for demographic transitions and support for elderly people to lay the foundation for future growth and another called for just taxation and policies that guarantee full employment.

Small Island Developing States: Strategies for SDG Success: Chair Maritza Chan, Vice-President, ECOSOC, opened this session on [Wednesday, 16 July](#), noting the importance of the 2024 Antigua and Barbuda Agenda for SIDS ([ABAS](#)).

Outlining challenges in accelerating SDG implementation in SIDS, Ilana Seid, Chair, Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS), cited finance, technology, and capacity-building. She called for tailored policies to address the specific needs of SIDS, noting a need

for expanded fiscal space, measurement tools beyond GDP, and strengthened data collection.

Sergio Fernandez de Cordova, Executive Chairman, PVBLC Foundation, mentioned the SIDS Global Data Hub as key to enhance SIDS' capacity by providing essential data for policymaking.

Navid Hanif, Assistant Secretary-General for Economic Development, echoed the importance of moving beyond traditional measures, especially to manage SIDS' external debt, and mentioned the Multidimensional Vulnerability Index as a vital tool to address SIDS' financial challenges.

On enhancing ABAS implementation, Seid highlighted the importance of South-South cooperation, private sector participation, and strengthened data systems. Hanif cited data advances in the UN system, enabling more granular analyses responding to the specific needs of SIDS. He noted this also contributes to improved regional cooperation and peer learning.

Ruth Julie Kissam, Advancing PNG Women Leaders Network, noted Papua New Guinea's forests equal 70% of its land mass, constituting a global climate lifeline and biodiversity habitat, but they face illegal logging and unsustainable agriculture. She called for immediate scaled-up finance, including debt-for-nature swaps and carbon markets.

In the ensuing discussion, many delegates underscored the international community's moral obligation to support SIDS as stewards of the Ocean. Many called for more accessible finance and immediate debt relief to create fiscal space for investments in essential areas including infrastructure, health care, and adaptation. Many supported the SIDS Center of Excellence and the Global Data Hub. One delegate called for international long-term financial support to SIDS as innovation labs in digital health, climate smart agriculture for food security, and context-specific solutions.

While welcoming the ABAS as a blueprint for sustainable development in SIDS' unique circumstances, one speaker noted the framework risks insufficiency of funding due to the outdated global financial architecture. Another lamented escalating geopolitical tensions, noting that the recent Ocean and Financing for Development conferences produced no binding targets or accountability mechanisms. There were calls for more equitable partnerships that treat SIDS as co-designers and for more predictable and long-term support.

Delivering the 2030 Agenda: Aligning global processes through inclusive Multilateralism - Perspectives from Major Groups and Other Stakeholders: On [Thursday, 17 July](#), representatives of Major Groups and other Stakeholders (MGoS) introduced a guide to the HLPF negotiations co-developed by ECOSOC, DESA and MGoS.

Moderator Rashima Kwatra, Co-Chair, MGoS Coordination Mechanism, highlighted the power of inclusive multilateralism and stakeholder participation, stressing that "a deeper crisis is not financial but moral," and we should "not confuse efficiency with justice" while seeking to revitalize multilateralism.

Winnie Byanyima, Executive Director, Joint UN Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS), underscored that inclusive multilateralism is central to ending HIV, highlighting the pivotal role of civil society advocacy in driving down costs of new treatments.

Nyaradzayi Gumbonzvanda, UN Women, called feminist and grassroots movements "the voice of accountability." She affirmed UN Women's aim to support their ability to contribute, pointing to establishment of the UN Trust Fund to End Violence against Women.

Zingiswa Losi, President, Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU), said trade unions cannot allow right-wing movements and corporate power to dismantle the basis of the UN, noting their focus on: decent jobs; living wages; universal social protection; workers' rights, including freedom of association and collective bargaining rights; inclusion in decision making; and equality.

Best Chitsanupong Nithiwana, Global Action for Trans Equality, presented her personal story as a trans woman growing up in Thailand, decrying the marginalization of LGBTQI and young people.

Sergio Colina Martín, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, European Union and Cooperation, Spain, stressed the importance of a participatory space for civil society and academia to ensure that the global agenda responds to the demands and needs of all communities.

Dino Corell, ILO, suggested that the ILO's unique tripartite structure offers a practical example of what inclusive governance can look like.

Amanda Rives, Together 2030 Stakeholder Group, said that, from a humanitarian perspective, multilateralism is not just a diplomatic ideal but a concrete lifeline for the world's most vulnerable people. She called for greater engagement with local and faith-based actors who "respond first and stay longest," in crisis situations.

During the interactive discussion, many countries expressed their support for multi-stakeholder collaboration and multilateralism, highlighting initiatives such as:

- support for youth delegates to actively contribute to multilateral processes;
- advancing green economy and blended finance;
- fostering South-South and triangular cooperation, including through volunteering initiatives; and
- strengthening equitable and multi-level partnerships bringing together governments, civil society, the private sector, academia, youth, and other stakeholders.

One speaker described the Regional Agreement on Access to Information, Public Participation and Justice in Environmental Matters in Latin America and the Caribbean (the [Escazú Agreement](#)) as a good example of multilateral governance. A delegate called on governments to match words with political will and "real investments" for civil society participation at regional and global fora. Another supported civil society access to UNGA and other high-level conferences.

MGoS speakers called for land policy reforms that recognize and safeguard land tenure on ancestral land, including for women, and provide space for culturally-relevant programmes at the local level; and urged efforts to protect hard-won language in international agreements. They lauded Brazilian civil society for continuing to produce shadow SDG reviews during a period of political uncertainty. One described the ECOSOC Youth Forum as one of the most visible examples of youth engagement.

Another called for coalitions of the willing to maintain multilateral initiatives where these are under threat, calling for the creation of a UN convention on development cooperation to acknowledge that development assistance "is not generosity but an overdue obligation."

Concluding the session, Moderator Kwatra said the session was a rallying call for a multilateralism that remains accountable to "We the People."

Transformation from the Ground Up: Acting at Local Level:

On [Thursday, 17 July](#), Moderator Emilia Saiz, Secretary-General, United Cities and Local Governments, recalled that 65% of SDG targets require local action, noting that increasing numbers of countries include local and regional governments in their VNRs.

Carmen Paz, Mayor, San Nicolás, Honduras, discussed how local SDG action led to SDG-aligned community plans, strengthened local data, facilitated gender-sensitive budgeting, and enhanced women's participation in decision-making processes.

Tebogo Matlou, South Africa Local Government Association, said his organization brings policy intervention and planning together through partnerships with government departments and participatory governance. He said the SDGs address major problems that cannot be tackled through voluntary measures alone.

Nazia Rehman, Congress of Local and Regional Authorities, Council of Europe, shared examples of local leadership programmes, noting lessons learned on the need for adequate resources and building trust. While welcoming the growing use of AI at the local level, she urged caution to avoid creating digital divides.

Rudolf Bühler, Farmers Major Group, underscored the significance of localizing SDGs and adopting a community-based approach, highlighting the [UN Declaration on the Rights of Peasants and Other People Working in Rural Areas](#) as an essential framework to protect basic rights of farmers.

During the ensuing discussions, delegates emphasized empowering local communities, fostering participation, and promoting stakeholder cooperation as key strategies for transformation. One delegate proposed youth involvement through education and advocacy, while another stressed meaningful participation and gender equality.

Common themes raised in the discussion included supporting capacity building, tracking progress, and ensuring inclusive decision making. A speaker underscored the growing importance of volunteerism. Some delegates highlighted their localization initiatives including conducting collaborative voluntary local reviews, making room for women's and Indigenous Peoples' participation in policymaking, and developing local monitoring tools to support evidence-based decision making.

There were calls for the immediate cessation of conflicts around the world and to support youth engagement regardless of their refugee or displaced status. A delegate called for more locally derived data, not just information on "national averages."

Other Sessions

Introduction of the report on the 10-Year Framework of Programmes on Sustainable Consumption and Production Patterns: This session convened on [Wednesday, 16 July](#), in line with UNGA Resolution 70/201, which states that due consideration should continue to be given to sustainable consumption and production (SDG 12) at meetings of the HLPF. Introducing the Report [E/2025/64](#), Annika Lindblom, Co-Chair of the Board of the 10-Year Framework of Programmes on Sustainable Consumption and Production (10YFP) noted it outlines four scalable and science-based solutions, and three key policy messages aligned with the HLPF 2025 theme.

Messages from the UN Environment Assembly: This session convened on [Tuesday, 22 July](#), during the HLPF Ministerial Segment. Abdullah Bin Ali Al-Amri (Oman), President of the 7th session of the UN Environment Assembly (UNEA-7) presented key messages from the Assembly, touching on the deep interlinkages

between environmental action and the other pillars of sustainable development. He encouraged all countries to seize the opportunity offered by the upcoming UNEA-7 session to build political momentum towards science-based policymaking at scale.

Regional perspectives on SDG implementation: This session convened on [Tuesday, 22 July](#), during the HLPF Ministerial Segment, and was moderated by Keisha McGuire, President and CEO, Present and Future Institute. In a first round of panel presentations, the heads of the five Regional Forums on sustainable development (Africa, Asia Pacific, Europe, Latin America and the Caribbean, and Western Asia) held in the lead up to HLPF 2025 reported on the discussions. The reports outlined key challenges and opportunities, as well as priorities for countries in each region. They also highlighted emerging best practices and innovative policy solutions for accelerating sustainable development, building on local realities, and comparative advantages for each region.

In the ensuing discussion, speakers highlighted, among other issues:

- the role of regional networks in building trust through documenting, certifying, and scaling proven practices;
- strong SDG momentum across the Central and Eastern Europe region; and
- the importance of strengthening national data ecosystems through improved use of big data, machine learning, and other AI tools to generate more disaggregated and granular data for decision making.

Many speakers emphasized the central role played by regional institutions in driving technological innovation, facilitating partnerships, and leveraging financial resources.

The session concluded with responses from Executive Secretaries of the five UN Regional Commissions.

ECA highlighted collaboration with other stakeholders such as the African Union and the African Development Bank.

The Economic Commission for Europe highlighted key enablers for the 2030 Agenda, including technology, innovative finance, policy coherence, dynamic partnerships especially at the city level, and the critical role of civil society and youth.

ESCWA noted instability and high debt levels as key challenges for the region and stressed the importance of leveraging AI, tailored and collaborative finance, equitable taxation, and reforming the global financial architecture.

ESCAP noted efforts to strengthen regional dialogue, green technology, and digital inclusion for youth, to equip them for future challenges.

The Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean underscored the Commission's commitment to supporting member countries' SDG aspirations, with only 23% of the SDGs targets on track in the region.

Voluntary National Reviews

Friday, 18 July: On [Friday](#), eleven countries presented their VNRs. Angola, Saint Lucia, Kyrgyzstan, and the Federated States of Micronesia presented their second VNR. Belarus, Malaysia, Sudan, Dominican Republic, and Eswatini presented their third VNR, and Guatemala its fourth.

GUATEMALA: Carlos Antonio Mendoza Alvarado, Secretary of Planning and Programming of the Presidency, highlighted progress on maternal mortality and teenage pregnancies, inclusion of people with disabilities in the labor market, and domestic resource mobilization, noting challenges on social and territorial inequalities. Responding to questions, he explained that a sound institutional

framework that can withstand threats to democracy is essential to ensure continuity in SDG implementation.

MALAYSIA: Ahmad Faisal Muhamad, Permanent Representative of Malaysia to the UN, outlined progress in poverty reduction, gender equality, and stable institutions. Pointing to regional inequalities, unequal labor market access, climate impacts, and institutional fragmentation as remaining challenges, he said his country will continue to align national plans with the SDGs as it prepares to graduate from middle-income to high-income status. Responding to questions, he underlined that VNR preparation was supported by integrated strategic planning embedded in SDG principles, robust data systems, and multi-stakeholder engagement.

SUDAN: Mohamed Bashar Mohamed, Undersecretary of Planning, Ministry of Finance and Economic Planning, said that Sudan made progress in areas of access to electricity, education, economic growth, and reducing maternal mortality until early 2023. However, these achievements were reversed as conflict resumed in April 2023, leading to, among other impacts, a surge in unemployment, destruction of factories, markets, and health centers, and a collapse of cooling chains for drugs and vaccines. Responding to questions, he said that most Sudanese states that were not affected by the conflict are back on track in their SDG implementation, while now addressing the additional burden of providing services to internally displaced persons.

ANGOLA: Maria do Rosário Teixeira de Alva Sequeira Bragança, Minister of State for Social Affairs, highlighted gains in health, education, social protection, and gender equality and highlighted Angola's role in pursuing peace in Africa, fighting poverty, and building climate resilience. Responding to questions, she highlighted identifying gaps and aligning priorities through improvements in monitoring for mid-term national development planning adjustments. She further noted a focus on empowering rural women through education, vocational training, and access to finance, citing a gender-sensitive budget and classification of government measures according to their contributions to gender equality.

KYRGYZSTAN: Bakyt Sydykov, Minister of Economy and Commerce, reported progress in modernizing infrastructure, clean energy, reducing poverty, digitalizing sustainable farming practices and learning processes, increasing water use efficiency and support for rural women, and building a climate-resilient green economy. Responding to questions, he stressed preserving water resources and glacial ecosystems while building resilience through green economic development as key challenges for climate adaptation.

SAINT LUCIA: Shawn Edward, Minister of Education, Sustainable Development, Innovation, Science, Technology and Vocational Training, explained that the majority of Saint Lucia's population has a decent living standard, emphasizing his country's whole-of-society approach and continuing progress regarding Ocean, energy, consumption and production, chemicals, health, education, domestic violence, citizen security, legislation, justice, and information access. Responding to questions, he noted that his country's GDP can disappear with one Category 4 hurricane, which necessitates borrowing to rebuild because international promises of help are frequently not met.

BELARUS: Siarhei Khamenka, National Coordinator, Achievement of SDGs, highlighted that Belarus has achieved 80.5% progress toward the SDGs. He shared the country's progress in different SDGs, including: gender equality, with equal pay and women entrepreneurs gaining strength; and health, prioritizing preventive measures through the promotion of a healthy lifestyle

and ensuring quality and accessible medical care. Responding to questions, he underscored a National Strategy for Sustainable Development targeted for conclusion in 2040. On youth inclusion, Khamenka said the government is actively engaging young people "as citizens," providing training and support for education through grants and initiatives aiming to "foster patriotism, constitutional order, and tradition."

DOMINICAN REPUBLIC: Martín Francos Rodríguez, Vice Minister of Planning and Public Investment of the Ministry of Economy, Planning and Development, shared his country's progress on various SDGs, emphasizing increasing private sector and civil society participation. Responding to questions on border policies, he highlighted over 90 initiatives aimed at strengthening institutions and ensuring the government's active presence in all territories, particularly in the most disadvantaged areas. Regarding financing, he stressed a roadmap involving all actors, saying 96% of the state's overall budget for 2024 is aligned with SDG targets.

BANGLADESH: Anisuzzaman Chowdhury, Ministry of Finance, noted stagnation on nine SDG goals, which he attributed to the mismanagement of the previous government that was overthrown in 2024. He cited new progress on human rights, non-discrimination, judicial independence, accountability, and institutional and electoral integrity, which reinvigorated the SDGs. Responding to questions, he explained that Bangladesh's VNR approach was unique in linking democratic reform to LDC graduation and climate action, organized by SDGs, in a whole-of-society approach.

ESWATINI: Appolo Maphalala, Minister for Housing and Urban Development, said his country is on track to achieve SDG 6 (clean water and sanitation) and 7 (affordable and clean energy), with 88% of households connected. He described activities to tackle non-communicable diseases and to preserve freshwater ecosystems, including through improved waste and wastewater management. Responding to questions, he said Eswatini is addressing data challenges by strengthening the national statistics system, capacity building, and leveraging administrative data and non-traditional data sources.

FEDERATED STATES OF MICRONESIA: Elina Akinaga, Secretary, Department of Resources and Development, noted significant achievements, including protecting 30% of marine ecosystems, doubling renewable energy capacity, implementing a gender action plan, and connecting remote schools with technology. She highlighted remaining challenges, including 30% of youth not in education, employment, or training, and persons with disabilities having less than 13% access to essential services. Responding to questions, she explained that her country's strategy to transition from aid dependency to economic self-reliance includes investing in ecotourism, engaging youth in traditional agriculture, enhancing food security, and exploring green and innovative financing.

Monday, 21 July: Six countries presented their VNRs on [Monday, 21 July](#). El Salvador, Malta, Czechia, Israel, and Papua New Guinea presented their second report, and Thailand its third.

EL SALVADOR: Francisco Martínez, Technical Coordination Specialist, National Council for Sustainable Development, noted progress in security, economic growth, social inclusion, and institutional strengthening. Questioned about human rights violations in his country, he noted El Salvador's civil war history, stressing advances in security and wellbeing. While acknowledging "it is not perfect," he underscored that the situation is improving, allowing people to live better. He stressed El Salvador's commitment to strengthening institutional mechanisms and

“breaking chains that hinder development,” noting the importance of the SDGs as a tool for monitoring and achieving peace.

MALTA: Francine Pace Caruana, Director for Sustainable Development, Ministry for the Environment, Energy and Public Cleanliness, outlined progress, including declining poverty, healthcare gains, a drop in the unemployment rate, improvements in gender equality and LGBTQI rights, advances in marine conservation, and strengthened data collection to track progress and inform policy. She discussed future priorities including strengthening statistical capacities, fostering stakeholder engagement, deepening collaboration, and promoting inclusive digital transformation. Responding to questions, she emphasized measures to address implementation gaps, such as working on the existing framework, ensuring transparency and accountability, and building the capacity of public administration bodies.

THAILAND: Maris Sangiampongsa, Minister of Foreign Affairs, and other speakers highlighted key challenges regarding better utilization of technology, financing, and SDGs’ localization, as well as strong advancements on SDGs 12 (sustainable consumption and production), 5 (gender equality), and 10 (reduced inequality), while acknowledging the need to intensify efforts on SDGs 15 (life on land), 8 (decent work and economic growth), and 17 (partnerships for the goals). Responding to questions, speakers emphasized the role of civil society as a key development partner, the importance of data-driven evaluation and collection systems, and the crucial role of technology in improving the quality and efficiency of data collection.

CZECHIA: Petr Kulháněk, Minister of Regional Development, reported progress in decarbonization, digital transformation, renewable energy, sustainable agriculture, and active participation of seniors, noting challenges regarding inclusion of socially marginalized groups. He explained that his country pursues a twin green and digital transition, while prioritizing climate change adaptation. Responding to questions, he underscored efforts to include high-school students in the elaboration of VNRs, adding that students identified SDG 16 (peace, justice, and strong institutions) as their highest priority.

ISRAEL: Rami Rozen, Director General, Ministry of Environmental Protection, presented case studies regarding, among other issues, universal and highly digitalized health care, protecting children and youth from cyberbullying, and municipal green building and climate change adaptation. Responding to questions, he explained that local governments receive direct funding to develop climate adaptation plans and support for implementation based on cost-benefit analysis and prioritization.

PAPUA NEW GUINEA: Ano Pala, National Planning Minister, outlined progress in health, education, poverty reduction, and infrastructure investment, but acknowledged gaps regarding gender equality in rural areas and prevention of gender-based violence. Responding to questions, he outlined efforts to leverage information and communication technologies (ICTs) to improve public service delivery and expand data collection, acknowledging significant gaps in ICT infrastructure. He also described challenges in collecting gender-disaggregated data in a culturally diverse context, noting that legal and policy frameworks to improve gender equality have been put into place.

Tuesday, 22 July: Nine countries presented their VNRs on [Tuesday, 22 July](#). Seychelles and Suriname presented their second VNR; Finland, Kazakhstan, The Gambia, and Japan presented for the third time; and the Philippines and Indonesia, for the fourth time.

FINLAND: Petteri Orpo, Prime Minister, discussed progress toward gender equality and clean energy, noting Russia’s invasion of Ukraine forced resource reallocation to security. A private sector representative urged businesses to develop scalable solutions on clean technologies and circular economy. A youth representative asked everyone to request youth input and listen to their critiques. Responding to questions, Orpo noted Finland’s whole-of-society approach, including working with scientists and the private sector on negative and positive international spillovers, describing models for measuring impacts of value chains and goods and services for a “positive handprint” in developing countries.

PHILIPPINES: Rosemarie Edillon, Undersecretary, Department of Economy, Planning and Development, presented a graph with most SDGs showing progress, while noting only SDGs 3 (good health and wellbeing) and 11 (sustainable cities) had regressed. She said since the first VNR in 2016 progress had been made on: SDG platforms; accelerating pace, monitoring, and convergence budgeting for SDG financing; and partnerships driving impact across regions and sectors. Responding to questions, Edillon noted her country prioritizes: climate action; peace, security, and governance; and implementation and monitoring. She gave examples, including: a comprehensive labor market strategy; education and school-to-work transition; and mitigation and adaptation intersectionality, including a resilience fund.

GERMANY: Rita Schwarzelühr-Sutter, Federal Ministry for the Environment, Climate Action, Nature Conservation and Nuclear Safety, presented her country’s third VNR, stressing it identifies six transformation areas and policy levers and outlining circular economy as one example. Bärbel Kofler, Federal Ministry for Economic, Cooperation and Development, described Germany’s feminist international assistance strategy as a key instrument for advancing SDG implementation abroad. Marie-Luise Abshagen, German Major Groups and Other Stakeholders, said Germany is failing to fully integrate the SDGs in its domestic policies. Responding to questions, the speakers discussed Germany’s efforts to promote a One Health approach, implement a supply-chain law, and collect timely and useable data.

KAZAKHSTAN: Presenting his country’s third VNR, Assan Darbayev, Vice-Minister of National Economy, stressed progress in poverty reduction, GDP growth, institutionalizing the SDGs, and localization, listing legal and policy measures taken to improve gender equality, labor rights, the rights of children and disabled people, and the rule of law. Responding to questions, he listed measures taken to improve gender equality and labor rights for people with disabilities and other marginalized groups. He also described a scheme of subsidized jobs to improve employment, especially for young people, and outlined a plan to prepare for a demographic transition and provide health services to older people.

SEYCHELLES: Laura Elizabeth Bertha Agathine, Ministry of Finance, National Planning and Trade, outlined areas of progress, including higher rankings in regional indices on good governance and low corruption, improved maternal and infant health, renewable energy, and protection of close to 30% of the Seychelles’ exclusive economic zone and 50% of its land territory. Responding to questions, she stated that development partners should amplify their solidarity with SIDS as they transition towards a diversified service economy that must be resilient to climate impacts, adding that partners should also advance climate justice and effective use of climate financing.

THE GAMBIA: Seedy Keita, Minister of Finance and Economic Affairs, emphasized his country's participatory approach involving local governments, women, youth, and the private sector. He mentioned a robust legal framework supporting gender equality, with laws against domestic violence and discrimination, and highlighted recent efforts to maintain the ban on female genital mutilation despite efforts to overturn it. Responding to questions, he highlighted The Gambia's efforts in promoting gender equality through financial support for victims of violence, a hotline for reporting violence cases, providing legal assistance, and the existence of a robust legal framework.

JAPAN: Takuma Miyaji, State Minister for Foreign Affairs, discussed the importance of multi-stakeholder engagement to address challenges such as an aging population and disaster risk reduction. He noted progress in increasing life expectancy and reducing greenhouse gas emissions, but acknowledged further efforts are needed in achieving gender equality. Responding to questions, he emphasized a cross-cutting approach to disaster management, with a national plan that includes infrastructure development and education programmes, along with engaging multiple stakeholders, including the private sector and civil society to strengthen collaboration.

INDONESIA: Febrian Alphyanto Ruddyard, Vice Minister of National Development Planning, stressed that 60% of nationally-defined SDG indicators are on track, including disease control, health coverage, reduced child marriage, and support for small-scale fisheries. He described key strategies to accelerate implementation, such as SDG mainstreaming in national and sub-national development planning, local ownership, transparency and accountability, inclusive growth, and sustainable development finance. Responding to questions, Ruddyard described steps taken to digitalize the health system, including the use of Earth observation data to identify underserved areas.

SURINAME: Elizabeth Bradley, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, focused on the challenge to sustainably develop Suriname's oil and gas reserves while maintaining the country's net carbon negative status. She outlined activities for SDG implementation including educational reform, training for climate-smart agriculture, legal protection of the rights of women and Indigenous and Tribal Peoples, providing access to clean water in rural areas, and social protection. Responding to questions, she provided more details on her country's strategy to sustainably develop their oil and gas reserves, including strict enforcement of environmental standards, independent oversight, and an economic strategy to diversify the economy.

Wednesday, 23 July: A final set of VNR presentations on Wednesday, 23 July, featured nine countries. Bulgaria presented its second VNR. Bhutan, Ghana, Iraq, Nigeria, Ethiopia, India, and Lesotho presented their third, and Qatar its fourth.

IRAQ: Muhammad Ali Tamim, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Planning, and other speakers, presented Iraq's third VNR entitled "Responsible investment, reconstruction, and justice." They highlighted its multi-stakeholder, evidence-based, and transparent approach, noting improvements in reducing poverty, education, and women's empowerment, among others. They underscored Iraq's priorities in expanding international cooperation and partnerships, diversifying the economy, and implementing a people-centered development strategy.

Discussion: QATAR, MOROCCO, OMAN, and CHILDREN AND YOUTH posed questions. On the localization of the SDGs, speakers highlighted the creation of specialized committees to adjust the SDGs for local plans and programmes to address disparities

among regions. They underscored Iraq's priority to reduce poverty, mentioning terrorism's critical impact but affirming that the poverty rate dropped nevertheless. They stressed the country's priority to empower citizens not only to benefit but also to contribute to the SDGs. On gender equality, they noted women hold 25% of ministerial positions and the number of women in parliament has increased, citing record levels of women's empowerment in Iraq. On carbon neutrality, they cited a state enterprise that invests in a low-emission economy and a national plan for green development, stating that carbon emissions in Iraq are low.

GHANA: Nii Moi Thompson, Chairman of the National Development Planning Commission, and Senior Advisor to the President, presented his country's third VNR, underscoring its three pillars: participation, inclusivity, and acceleration. Noting its whole-of-government and whole-of-society approach, he said it engaged a broad spectrum of stakeholders, including persons with disabilities and youth, and was based on evidence and people's needs. He reported progress on SDGs 3, 5, and 14, noting that neonatal mortality has decreased but maternal mortality remains high. He said challenges remain in achieving SDGs 8 and 17, particularly in addressing unemployment, and stressed the need to strengthen data systems and mobilize domestic revenue.

Discussion: Thompson answered questions from CZECHIA, the AFRICAN REGIONAL MECHANISM FOR MGoS, DENMARK, the UK, SIERRA LEONE, and EQUATORIAL GUINEA. He acknowledged youth as key contributors to the SDGs, mentioning initiatives in education, skill development, and entrepreneurship. He noted that human rights and youth employment are prioritized in Ghana's Constitution and included in national plans, and said Ghana is tracking its economic capacity to absorb new entrants. He stressed the importance of initiatives to enhance data systems and noted Ghana's investment in innovation, with technological and non-technological solutions. On the need to reduce the informal sector, he cited a formalization programme that prioritizes boosting productivity over taxation, noting that national health insurance is also accessible to informal workers.

BHUTAN: Chenchu, Director, Prime Minister's Office, presented his country's third VNR, highlighting its people-centered approach and the integration of Bhutan's philosophy of Gross National Happiness (GNH). He mentioned Bhutan's graduation from LDC status in 2023 and reported progress, citing poverty reduction, forest coverage exceeding 69% of the country, and Bhutan's status as a carbon-negative country. He stressed the main challenges include youth unemployment, migration, and limited finance for climate adaptation, saying the decline of official development assistance (ODA) intensifies them. He shared on national initiatives, citing the Bhutan Climate Fund and Bhutan's leading role in the establishment of the G-Zero Forum of Carbon Negative and Carbon Neutral Countries. Chenchu called for international support, especially in finance, capacity building, and technical assistance for digital transformation and data collection.

Discussion: Chenchu answered questions from BANGLADESH, NGOs, INDIA, and EQUATORIAL GUINEA. He underscored the GNH's holistic approach to wellbeing, which shares deep synergies with the SDGs. He mentioned Bhutan's initiatives in renewable energy, the promotion of green infrastructure, and sustainable agriculture and tourism. He called for more support from the international community, saying, "Maintaining carbon negative does not come without costs." He stated that Bhutan prioritizes youth, mentioning initiatives focused on education and skilling.

QATAR: Abdulaziz bin Nasser bin Mubarak Al Khalifa, Secretary General, National Planning Council, noted progress regarding universal healthcare, job creation, gender parity, and investments in international cooperation and partnerships. Pointing to Qatar's "all inclusive" approach to VNR development, he described a unified national plan focusing on human development, education, healthcare, a future-ready workforce, citizenship, and international partnerships, to advance Qatar's development aligned with the SDGs.

Discussion: Responding to questions from MALAYSIA, CHILDREN AND YOUTH, IRELAND, and SWITZERLAND, he reiterated Qatar's progress on gender equality, noting that women constitute 63% of the labor force. He also described efforts to mitigate carbon emissions from Qatar's liquefied petroleum gas industry, including carbon capture, utilization, and storage, blue ammonia, and solar energy production. Another speaker discussed the drivers of Qatar's digital transformation, including a landmark broadband agreement, investment in human digital capacity, and an integrated multi-level data strategy.

NIGERIA: Princess Adejoke Orelope-Adefulire, Senior Special Advisor to the President on SDGs, noted mixed results, with some progress towards SDG 3 (good health and wellbeing) and other SDGs impacted by global crises such as the COVID-19 pandemic, climate change, inflation, and economic and social shocks. She outlined efforts to establish a broad foundation for inclusive and resilient transformation, including improving statistics capacities and implementing the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development's Inclusive Data Charter, developing an integrated financial framework, creating coherent governance structures, and integrated planning.

Discussion: Responding to questions from FINLAND, GERMANY, SENEGAL, and COMMUNITIES DISCRIMINATED ON WORK AND DESCENT, she described Nigeria's approach toward inclusive SDG action and reporting, including by dividing the country into six zones for engagement and participation, the use of youth to engage with and monitor progress in local communities, and efforts to improve data management and reporting. Acknowledging security challenges, she outlined measures taken to improve security, social protection, women's empowerment, and social accountability.

BULGARIA: Zhecho Stankov, Minister of Energy, stressed his country's data-driven and multi-stakeholder approach, including participation of local authorities, academia, NGOs, and the private sector. He highlighted key national priorities, including green technology and digitalization, better integration of persons with disabilities, and international cooperation. He reported progress in education, healthcare, gender equality, and reducing poverty and hunger, among other gains. Regarding areas requiring additional efforts, he mentioned the importance of timely and reliable data to improve policymaking; focus on the local level; and promoting inclusive participation. Noting Bulgaria's VNR includes, for the first time, a youth contribution, a youth delegate highlighted priorities, including education, health, and decent work, citing the National Youth Forum as an essential platform to ensure that national policies reflect the needs of young people.

Discussion: INDONESIA, CZECHIA, JAPAN, COMMUNITIES DISCRIMINATED ON WORK AND DESCENT, SOUTH AFRICA, and EQUATORIAL GUINEA posed questions. On the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions, Stankov said Bulgaria expects to surpass the EU's overall 2030 target, citing investments in green technologies and the nuclear sector, including a pilot project to

install solar panels on households' roofs to lower the cost of energy. A youth delegate highlighted the challenges faced by young people, including lack of reliable data and a gap between the skills required by the labor market and the education system. They cited the Annual Youth Report as an essential tool to support evidence-based decision making.

ETHIOPIA: Fitsum Assefa Adela, Minister of Planning and Development, highlighted Ethiopia's actions in closing demographic gaps, promoting local review, localizing innovation, and engaging all stakeholders. She reported progress on education, health, gender equality, and climate, citing the Green Legacy Initiative (GLI) as an important tool for restoring landscapes and mobilizing participation. Adela stressed challenges, including access to finance; unemployment, especially for women; and the decline of ODA. She called for more predictable finance, fair trade systems, and global reforms that reflect emerging economies' realities to overcome their historical bottleneck.

Discussion: Adela answered questions from INDONESIA, CZECHIA, INDIA, EQUATORIAL GUINEA, and INDIGENOUS PEOPLES. She emphasized that gender equality is a priority in Ethiopia, with a legal framework in place to protect women's rights, citing programmes that are improving women's participation in various sectors, including a 50% representation of women in parliament. She mentioned the GLI as an initiative to create green jobs, especially for young people. She mentioned efforts to formalize and achieve universal health insurance. On human rights protection, she stressed Ethiopia's legal framework to prevent violence against women, noting her country's commitment to transparency and accountability, and emphasized their responsibility to maintain peace and the rule of law. She affirmed that public development projects are guided by the SDGs and respect for human rights.

LESOTHO: Retselisitsoe Matlanyane, Minister of Finance and Development Planning, discussed challenges, including a 50% rate of youth outside employment or education, an 80% rate of informal employment, intensifying climate disasters in a context of underfunded adaptation, persistent high rates of gender-based violence, a shortage of health workers, and growing rates of internal and cross-border migration. Noting progress despite challenging conditions, she highlighted improvements in early childhood mortality, contraceptive use, women in leadership, and youth entrepreneurship. She discussed efforts to improve legal frameworks and challenge harmful gender norms, noting that partnerships are essential to build her country's capacity to achieve the SDGs.

Discussion: Responding to questions from SOUTH AFRICA, MALAYSIA, ARMENIA, ZIMBABWE, and EDUCATION AND ACADEMIA, she confirmed that marginalized groups were included in VNR development, described legal mechanisms and a quota system to improve women's participation in decision-making, and outlined how her country became a leader in aquaculture.

INDIA: Suman Bery, Vice Chairman, National Institution for Transforming India, reported progress regarding poverty reduction, food security, formalizing employment, access to clean water, access to health care, clean cooking, and start-up activities. He described key measures leading to these improvements, including investments in inclusive and scalable digital infrastructure, improved data for evidence-based decisions and targeting, and empowering village councils to realize bottom-up implementation.

Discussion: Responding to questions from MALAYSIA, ANGOLA, CZECHIA, ISRAEL, NORWAY, ETHIOPIA, BHUTAN, and a civil society organization (CSO) from India, he shared lessons learned during infrastructure development, including

a need for balance between physical and social infrastructure expansion and between public and private infrastructure and the importance of monitoring large national projects. Another speaker explained that out-of-pocket expenses for health care have declined, while acknowledging that more progress is needed, and education measures are compensating for COVID-19 related setbacks, putting the country back on track towards education objectives.

Ministerial Segment

UN@80 – Catalyzing Change for Sustainable Development.

Opening of the High-Level Segment: Opening the High-Level Segment on [Monday, 21 July](#), ECOSOC President Bob Rae noted this year's HLPF is convening against a backdrop of “enormous global disruption,” and stressed this is not the time to abandon ideals “but to double down” on solidarity.

UN Secretary-General António Guterres welcomed progress at three recent global events, the World Health Assembly, the UN Ocean Conference, and FfD4, suggesting the outcomes are not isolated wins but signs of momentum demonstrating that “multilateralism can deliver.”

Philémon Yang, President, UN General Assembly, suggested the HLPF can be a platform for implementation policy, guided by science and evidence in the spirit of global solidarity and collaboration.

Carolina Rojas, CHILDREN AND YOUTH, stressed that sustainable development requires equitable distribution of resources and power and called for, among other multilateral efforts, debt relief and long-term financial support to grassroots organizations, who are “the first to respond and last to get paid.”

General Debate: The Ministerial Segment's General Debate convened from 21 to 23 July.

On [Monday, 21 July](#), and [Tuesday, 22 July](#), more than 70 ministers and other high-level representatives of Member States, regional groupings, and interest groups delivered statements.

Many reaffirmed their strong commitment to the 2030 Agenda and to multilateralism, as well as the ongoing UN80 process, stressing the need for a strengthened UN amid escalating and interrelated global crises. Referring to the 2024 Summit of the Future, INDONESIA offered four specific actions to restore trust in multilateralism: a focus on social inclusion and leaving no one behind; scaling up game-changing solutions, such as blue economy approaches and digital transformation focusing on small and medium-sized enterprises; enhanced knowledge sharing; and acting urgently and in synergy.

Several countries referred to negotiations on the HLPF Ministerial Declaration, with BRAZIL and VENEZUELA regretting the omission of agreed language on women's reproductive rights.

Many countries underlined the link between peace, security, and sustainable development. PALESTINE stressed that in Gaza, “an entire population is left behind,” describing the killing of tens of thousands as an assault not only on people but on the UN Charter, international law, and the principles of international development. FINLAND, along with many other speakers, underscored the multilateral system must protect human rights in the face of conflicts, as in Ukraine, Gaza, and Sudan, that are violating the UN Charter. YEMEN noted the reduction of the country's GDP by more than 50% as a result of conflict, with 80% of their population living below the poverty line.

Another common theme was the need to reform the international financial architecture to galvanize the SDGs, as set out in the Sevilla Commitment. VIET NAM, among others, noted potential

to leverage funding from the private sector. Describing themselves as the largest provider of ODA globally, the EU reaffirmed their commitment to narrowing the financing gap in the spirit of the Sevilla Commitment.

SOUTH AFRICA called for a paradigm shift for the SDGs and reform of the UN system, including the Security Council, stressing concrete outcomes and advancing global peace.

CHINA, supported by the RUSSIAN FEDERATION, discussed the 83-member Group of Friends of the Global Development Initiative, calling for developed countries to fulfil their ODA and climate financing commitments. A common thread across the country presentations was the highlighting of specific SDG successes, with a focus on the five focal SDGs at HLPF 2025.

Speakers mentioned, *inter alia*:

- scaling up universal health care and other social protection measures to ensure no one is left behind;
- policy and legislative reforms to address gender inequality and other entrenched challenges;
- efforts to integrate the SDGs across country planning and budgetary frameworks, including at the local level; and
- a growing focus on policy coherence through whole-of-government and whole-of-society approaches to SDG implementation.

SAUDI ARABIA urged a focused approach to SDG implementation that channels resources where they are most needed, centered on scalable solutions, and relying on data and evidence.

The final segment of the high-level debate took place on Wednesday, 23 July, with statements from nearly 70 speakers.

Continuing the theme of peace and security, HUNGARY lamented the continuing toll of the war in Ukraine on development aspirations in neighboring countries, commenting, “80 years later, the UN has a new role – avoiding the launch of World War 3.” TUNISIA, LEBANON, and many others expressed concern about the climate of impunity to human rights violations, calling for an immediate end of Israel's violations of the human rights of Palestinians.

Exercising its right of reply, GEORGIA termed a previous statement from the Russian Federation referring to the 2008 invasion of Georgia's territory as a “misleading and false narrative,” stressing that Russia misinterpreted the report of the fact-finding mission report.

Japan, on behalf of FRIENDS OF EDUCATION AND LIFELONG LEARNING, referred to an annual funding gap of USD 100 billion and called for bold and collective action to: increase and improve education funding from domestic and international sources; strengthen international partnerships; and invest in teachers as agents of change.

JAPAN noted their contribution to international development cooperation through the ongoing World Expo 2025 Osaka, Kansai, as well as the forthcoming 9th Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD 9) taking place in Yokohama in August 2025. ALGERIA looked forward to hosting the Intra-African Trade Fair in September 2025.

BOLIVIA attributed slow progress on the SDGs to the predominant unequal and unsustainable development model, calling for greater attention to social justice, the rights of Mother Earth, and inclusive multilateralism. PARAGUAY highlighted SDG partnerships focused on high impact projects such as decent work, school meals and women's empowerment.

GUINEA observed that behind the stark numbers are “stories of remarkable success” that prove investments do bear fruit. BURKINA FASO highlighted their “patriotic support fund” focused on social development sectors.

Describing science as “the great equalizer of our time,” COSTA RICA underlined full and effective participation of women and girls, along with leveraging AI and open data to accelerate progress in areas such as agriculture, health, and the blue economy.

In a segment dedicated to statements from intergovernmental organizations and UN entities, 24 speakers delivered statements. Noting its global policing goals were designed with the SDGs in mind, INTERPOL enumerated programmes ranging from protecting female victims of human trafficking to tackling corruption and illicit financial flows. They emphasized the importance of international cooperation to counter new and emerging threats such as cybercrimes, “even where diplomatic relations do not exist.”

The INTERNATIONAL OLYMPIC COMMITTEE underscored the transformative role of sports, citing the first “gender equal” Olympic games in Paris.

INTERNATIONAL UNION FOR CONSERVATION OF NATURE (IUCN) described the upcoming IUCN World Conservation Congress as an example of multilateralism in action. The INTERNATIONAL FEDERATION OF RED CROSS AND RED CRESCENT SOCIETIES stressed the role of local actors as first responders in disasters and conflict zones.

The ORGANISATION FOR ECONOMIC CO-OPERATION AND DEVELOPMENT (OECD) outlined its contribution to SDG analysis and policy frameworks, calling for greater efforts to unlock the catalytic capacity of ODA through increased private sector financing.

The INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTE FOR DEMOCRACY AND ELECTIONS observed that only 3% of democracies perform poorly on SDG 5, compared to 50% of authoritarian regimes.

The AFRICAN UNION (AU) COMMISSION noted links between the AU’s Agenda 2063 and the 2030 Agenda. THE INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATION FOR MIGRATION underscored the positive impacts of well-managed migration, noting that global remittances have surpassed ODA.

Diverse UN agencies, including the UN HUMAN SETTLEMENTS PROGRAMME (UN-HABITAT), UN ENVIRONMENT PROGRAMME (UNEP), UN CHILDREN’S FUND (UNICEF), UN INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT ORGANIZATION (UNIDO), WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION, INTERNATIONAL TELECOMMUNICATIONS UNION, FAO, UN OFFICE FOR PROJECT SERVICES (UNOPS), UN HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR REFUGEES (UNHCR), and UNAIDS, offered thematic perspectives.

A final segment heard statements from more than 20 interest groups and MGoS.

THE WORLD ROMA FEDERATION urged Member States to embrace structural inclusion that is truly global and intersectional.

BUSINESS AND INDUSTRY expressed the business sector’s readiness to “engineer in” key partners to support the UN80 process and deliver on the Pact for the Future.

THE STAKEHOLDER GROUP ON AGEING urged attention, not “lip service,” “to avert waves of distress from a rapidly aging world.” As a concrete measure, they proposed scaling up data disaggregation by five-year bands. EDUCATION AND ACADEMIA highlighted safety in the education sector, noting more than 60 million girls each year are attacked on the way to school.

The WORLD FEDERATION OF NEUROLOGY called for greater attention to brain health as a non-communicable disease, calling for implementation of the [WHO intersectoral action plan on epilepsy and other neurological disorders](#). PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES noted that only three global SDG indicators can be disaggregated and compared across several countries.

TIANJIN ECO-CITY FRIEND OF GREEN ECOCULTURE PROMOTION ASSOCIATION stressed that to leave no one behind “we must take science as the radar and communities, as the anchor.”

HEART AMBASSADORS said a paradigm shift from “surviving to thriving” is possible through a focus on changing hearts.

INDIGENOUS PEOPLES expressed concern about growing threats to Indigenous rights in the name of just transition and climate resilience, calling for these issues to be taken up at WSSD 2.

CHILDREN AND YOUTH pointed to the active engagement of the youth constituency at HLPF 2025, stating they organized more than 20 side events with more than 300 young people attending in person. They called for full and complete implementation of the 2030 Agenda, “with no backsliding of SDGs.”

Closing Plenary

On Wednesday afternoon, 23 July, delegates gathered for the closing plenary.

Adoption of the Ministerial Declaration: Jakub Kulhánek, Permanent Representative of Czechia to the UN, and Co-Facilitator of the negotiations on the Ministerial Declaration, thanked delegates for their efforts to find consensus on the Ministerial Declaration at a time when a range of interlinked persistent challenges jeopardize the 2030 Agenda. Noting that the Declaration seeks to signal the world’s unwavering commitment, he expressed hope that “the finely calibrated consensus” will lead to tangible results on the ground.

Chair Rae then introduced the draft Ministerial Declaration ([HLPF/2025/L.1](#)), explaining that it represents the best possible path forward. Noting that “consensus does not mean unanimity,” he said outstanding disagreements can be put to a vote and explanations of votes can be recorded in the HLPF official report.

Chair Rae informed delegates that the UK had submitted an amendment, supported by more than 30 Member States, to delete a reference that access to safe, affordable, effective and quality medicines, vaccines, diagnostics and therapeutics and other health products and technologies should be “unhindered.” Following a vote, the original language was retained. SWITZERLAND requested recording its interpretation that the word “unhindered” has no impact on the intellectual property rights pertaining to the products or technologies concerned. The EU and ISRAEL stated that technology transfer must be voluntary and based on mutually agreed terms.

Iraq, for GROUP OF 77 AND CHINA, declared the group’s disappointment that several parts of the Declaration backtrack from outcomes agreed to at FfD4. They also urged delegates to retain language calling for “further effective measures and actions to be taken, in conformity with international law, to remove the obstacles to the full realization of the right to self-determination of peoples living under colonial and foreign occupation [...]”

ISRAEL requested removing this language, stating that it selectively highlights a single issue, which “reflects politicization of the Declaration text and the HLPF.” Delegates voted to keep the reference.

The US rejected the draft Declaration, stating that the SDGs exercise soft global power on governments, which is “inconsistent with US interests” and the US government’s duty to protect

US citizens. They further noted that the Declaration, *inter alia*: promulgates divisive causes; seeks to turn the SDGs into a mandate for development and finance institutions; aims to overturn the independence of development banks; affects intellectual property issues outside of the HLPF's mandate; undermines the rights of creditors; and ignores the US's previous explanation of a vote rejecting the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs.

Despite its rejection of the Declaration as a whole, the US insisted on calling for votes on two sets of references. On the first vote, seeking to delete five paragraphs supporting sexual and reproductive rights and access to sexual and reproductive health care services, gender equality, ending all forms of discrimination, and mainstreaming a gender perspective in climate change decisions, the US said they cannot accept "divisive" concepts like gender and climate change. On the second vote, aiming to delete a reference to the positive contributions of the ILO toward promoting social justice and decent work for all, the US said they cannot accept the "divisive concept" of social justice.

Delegates rejected both proposals by overwhelming majorities.

MEXICO described the US position as "divisive practice," stating that to call for votes on parts of a declaration a Member State had already rejected as a whole is unacceptable. They emphasized that this should not be repeated.

Various delegations offered statements to explain their vote. NICARAGUA, MALAYSIA, KUWAIT, EGYPT, THE GAMBIA, THE HOLY SEE, and BELARUS asked to record their dissociation from references to sexual and reproductive rights, with MALAYSIA and the HOLY SEE noting that no right to abortion can be inferred, and KUWAIT, SAUDI ARABIA, and NIGER stating that sexual and reproductive rights must be in line with domestic legislation, culture, and values.

EGYPT, PAKISTAN, MALAYSIA, LIBYA, IRAN, IRAQ, NIGERIA, INDONESIA, the RUSSIAN FEDERATION, ALGERIA, BELARUS, SAUDI ARABIA, and SENEGAL asked to record their dissociation from references to "multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination" noting that the term is not legally defined. ITALY preferred the term "overlapping" forms of discrimination, noting that "intersecting forms of discrimination" could exclude non-intersecting forms of discrimination from legal persecution.

PAKISTAN and IRAN also asked to record their dissociation from references to "gender-related killing." SAUDI ARABIA opposed language on gender-based violence, preferring reference to "all forms of violence."

NIGER, SENEGAL, and THE GAMBIA declared that only two forms of gender—masculine and feminine—should be recognized.

CHILE regretted that no consensus on gender equality could be achieved.

Supporting references on sexual and reproductive rights and gender-based violence, the EU asked to record their dissociation from a reference opposing "unilateral coercive measures" (sanctions), explaining it refers to a false narrative that such measures would violate the UN Charter. The EU also expressed disappointment that references to the Paris Agreement on climate change could not be retained.

Following a US request for a vote on the entire draft Declaration, delegates adopted it by a vote of 154 in favor, 2 against, and 2 abstentions.

TÜRKIYE asked to record their dissociation from references to UNCLOS.

URUGUAY expressed disappointment that the declaration could not be adopted by consensus.

HUNGARY asked to record reservations on recognizing the positive impact of migration.

NEW ZEALAND, CANADA, and AUSTRALIA voiced concerns over the weakening of language on gender equality and climate change and, with the EU, said the Rio Principles must be seen as a package rather than singling out the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities, as stated in a reference to climate change.

Closure of the Meeting: Delegates adopted the draft report of the meeting (E/HLPF/2024/L.2), on the understanding that the ECOSOC Secretariat would make final revisions.

In his closing statement, UN Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs Li Junhua said the 35 VNRs presented provided inspiring examples of policies and actions in advancing the SDGs, adding to a valuable database for joint learning that currently contains more than 400 VNR reports. Li commended the dedicated engagement of MGoS and described the final outcome as a "powerful reiteration" of multilateral resolve that reaffirms collective commitment to the 2030 Agenda and its 17 SDGs.

Thanking all participants and organizers, Chair Rae gavelled the meeting to a close at 6:02 pm.

Ministerial Declaration

The 2025 [Ministerial Declaration](#) identifies the current trends and challenges, alongside priority actions for advancing sustainable, inclusive, science- and evidence-based solutions for the 2030 Agenda and its SDGs for leaving no one behind.

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

- strongly reaffirms a commitment to effectively implement the 2030 Agenda and its SDGs and uphold all principles enshrined in it;
- emphasizes the urgent and interconnected challenges and crises posed by rising inequality, including gender inequality, racism, persistent poverty, hunger and malnutrition, unemployment, global economic uncertainty, widening digital divides and technological disparities, climate change and biodiversity loss;
- reaffirms that there can be no sustainable development without peace and no peace without sustainable development; and
- reiterates that 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 **priority actions** for advancing sustainable, inclusive, science- and evidence-based solutions for the 2030 Agenda and its SDGs, the Declaration calls for:

- accelerating the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, taking bold, ambitious, accelerated, just and transformative action in the remaining five years;
- implementing the political declaration of the 2023 SDGs Summit and the commitments in the Pact for the Future and its annexes; and
- removing obstacles to the full realization of the right to self-determination of peoples living under colonial and foreign occupation, recognizing that sustainable development cannot be realized without peace and security, and peace and security will be at risk without sustainable development.

The Declaration commits Ministers and representatives to:

- address ongoing financing gaps for achieving the SDGs, scale up international public finance, improve access to concessional finance, and deliver more affordable, predictable, sustainable and sufficient finance to developing countries;
- bridge digital STI divides;
- accelerate the transfer of environmentally sound technologies to developing countries on favorable terms, including on concessional and preferential terms, as mutually agreed; and
- enhance global, regional, national and local partnerships for sustainable development, engaging all relevant stakeholders, including civil society, the private sector, academia and youth.

On ensuring healthy lives and promoting well-being for all at all ages (**SDG 3**), Ministers and high-level representatives commit to, among others:

- strengthening health systems and investing in primary healthcare to achieve universal health coverage;
- enhancing international cooperation in the health sector and intensifying efforts towards achieving universal health coverage, including improving equitable access to quality essential health services and safe, effective, quality and affordable vaccines, diagnostics, and therapeutics for all;
- implementing comprehensive strategies for the prevention, early diagnosis, management, and treatment of noncommunicable diseases and mental health conditions; and
- greater cooperation in medical research, sharing experience and best practices, early warning and response systems, and technology transfer on mutually agreed terms.

On achieving gender equality and empowering all women and girls (**SDG 5**), Ministers and high-level representatives commit to, *inter alia*:

- achieve gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls and ensure the full and equal enjoyment of all human rights and fundamental freedoms by all women and girls, throughout their life course;
- ensure the full and effective participation and equal opportunities for women in all spheres and levels of political, economic and public life;
- ensure universal access to sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights; and
- eliminate, prevent and respond to all forms of violence against women and girls, in public and private spaces, both in person and in digital contexts, such as sexual and gender-based violence.

On promoting sustained, inclusive, and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all (**SDG 8**), Ministers and high-level representatives commit to:

- promote sustained, inclusive, and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all, in all countries;
- include youth in the formulation, implementation and assessment of sustainable development strategies and programmes designed to address their specific needs;
- promote development-oriented policies that support productive activities, decent job creation, entrepreneurship, creativity, and innovation; and
- invest in inclusive and equitable quality education at all levels, vocational education, and training.

Regarding the conservation and sustainable use of the Oceans, seas and marine resources (**SDG 14**), Ministers and high-level representatives commit to, *inter alia*:

- enhance and accelerate just and transformative action on marine conservation and restoration, Ocean governance, sustainable

fisheries, and fostering sustainable Ocean-based economies, and to prevent, significantly reduce, and control marine pollution of all kinds;

- take action in accordance with, reinforce and not duplicate or undermine existing legal instruments, arrangements, processes, mechanisms, or entities;
- take into account that Ocean action must be based on the best available science and knowledge, including, where available, traditional knowledge, knowledge of Indigenous Peoples, and local knowledge system;
- accelerate action to prevent, significantly reduce, and control marine pollution of all kinds, as well as developing an international legally binding instrument on plastic pollution.

On strengthening the means of implementation and revitalizing the global partnership for sustainable development (**SDG 17**), Ministers and high-level representatives commit to, *inter alia*:

- continue to reform the international financial architecture, enhancing its resilience, coherence, and effectiveness in responding to present and future challenges and crises;
- take concrete actions to enhance fiscal space, address debt challenges of developing countries, and lower the cost of capital;
- promote inclusive and effective international tax cooperation;
- fully support and continue to strengthen the UN development system, to make it more strategic, responsive, accountable, collaborative, and integrated;
- take action to bridge digital divides and spread the benefits of digitalization, and promote equitable and inclusive access to and development of AI;
- strengthen the implementation of the 2030 Agenda at all levels, including through involving and empowering local authorities to ensure local ownership of the SDGs; and
- consider using complementary measures of progress that go beyond GDP as a complement to existing policies and practices.

On **VNRs**, the Ministerial Declaration encourages all countries to use the key findings of their VNRs and the sharing of locally-driven development approaches and pathways to accelerate actions to implement the 2030 Agenda. It encourages greater support for developing countries in the preparation of more evidence- and data-based VNRs, and to ensure access to high-quality, timely, reliable, and disaggregated data. The Declaration also calls for the full, equal, and meaningful participation of all relevant stakeholders in VNR design, implementation, and monitoring, including local governments, civil society organizations, academia, and the private sector.

A Brief Analysis of the 2025 HLPF

The 2025 session of the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF) kicked off the last third of the 15-year timeline for achieving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). With five years to go, concerns about the slow progress on most of the SDG targets dominated the session, together with exhortations that “we must do better.” Even though work on “post-2030” will only officially begin at the SDG Summit in 2027, there is a clear sense of urgency. As Tuvalu said during the Ministerial debate, “The window for decisive action is closing, and closing fast. We will either celebrate success together in 2030 or have to explain our collective failure to the next generation.” The unacknowledged elephant in the room, however, is that 75% of the SDG targets are

very unlikely to be met by 2030, no matter how much delegates push to “accelerate.”

Reality has started to sink in, however, as several pessimistic observers commented on the lack of substantive discussion of post-2030 scenarios on the penultimate day of the meeting. Even during the first week of HLPF 2025, Ambassador Bob Rae, President of ECOSOC and Chair of the HLPF, did not shy away from this issue during a press briefing, noting that “life doesn’t stop after 2030.”

Is it all doom and gloom or are there slivers of light on the horizon? This brief analysis will explore the reasons for concern and hope displayed at HLPF 2025.

Reasons for Concern

The status of the SDGs in 2025, as noted repeatedly during the HLPF’s eight days, provides many reasons for concern. According to the 2025 UN Sustainable Development Goals Report, while progress is being made on 35% of the SDG targets, only 18% are on track to be met, whereas progress on another 35% is either stagnating or regressing. The scenario is even worse for the SDGs in focus this year: SDG 3 (Good health and wellbeing), SDG 5 (gender equality), SDG 8 (decent work and economic growth), SDG 14 (life below water), and SDG 17 (partnerships for the goals). As the Secretary-General’s Report prepared for HLPF 2025 showed, none of them are on track, SDG 8 and SDG 14 remain the most off-track goals, and SDG 14 is also among the most underfunded.

Delegates weren’t shy in citing factors they held responsible for this disheartening picture, including well-known explanations such as lack of funding, lack of political will, and lack of capacity. There were also strong references to “multiple interlinked crises” including conflict, climate disasters, inflation, and lingering COVID-19 impacts, which are disrupting countries’ efforts for SDG action. This chorus of complaints was aptly likened by one participant to an anecdote about an outgoing Head of State who was questioned about the reasons he failed to accomplish what he had set out to do during his time in office. “Events, my dear, events!”

While most delegates acknowledge that unforeseen global crises are challenging SDG progress, few are willing to brush them off as “events.” Several delegates pointed to deep structural problems like unsustainable debt burdens and rapidly shrinking foreign aid budgets as countries shift resources to defense spending in the face of increasing conflict. The UN, not least, is directly suffering from severe arrears in countries’ assessed contributions and growing distrust in global governance, given the seeming inability of the UN to effectively address multiple crises.

For those worried about the state of multilateralism, HLPF 2025 offered ample evidence. On multiple occasions delegates clashed over references to current conflicts, calling out terrorism, unprovoked aggression, and attempted genocide, while at the same time accusing each other of politicizing the Forum by singling out specific conflicts rather than stating their concern about the impact of rising geopolitical tension on the SDGs.

During the closing plenary, several delegations called for votes to delete references or entire paragraphs from the Co-Chairs’ “finely calibrated consensus” on the Draft Ministerial Declaration. Most remarkable was an intervention by the US, who, after declaring their rejection of the Declaration as a whole, requested votes on removing several paragraphs reaffirming commitment to and urging action on gender equality, climate action, and labor rights, saying that “gender,” “climate change,” and “social justice” are divisive concepts. While these proposals were overwhelmingly rejected and Mexico even called the US’s intervention “divisive and

unacceptable,” it did provoke many other countries to record their reservations or dissociation from specific paragraphs. Delegates eventually adopted the Ministerial Declaration as drafted, with only the US and Israel voting against it, but the clash left many to wonder whether HLPF had just witnessed another sign of an increasingly dysfunctional UN.

While it is easy to feel despair, it is also easy to overblow the importance of this episode. The dissociation of one country from the UN agenda for a sustainable future for humankind is regrettable, but it is not a problem that the HLPF can or should try to solve. On the contrary, several delegates observed that Chair Rae and his team had come prepared. At the outset, Rae stated that “consensus is not unanimity,” reminding delegates that it is always possible to move ahead without unanimous support. Rae and his team navigated the session through a series of votes and ensured that all parties that wished to do so had the opportunity to express and register their concerns. “What we have seen,” as one delegate put it, “is democracy in action. We fought hard to come to consensus, and when that was not possible, we took a majority decision and moved on.” Given the overwhelming support for the Ministerial Declaration, one participant commented, “Relax, multilateralism did not die today!”

Reasons for Hope

Progress on the SDGs themselves is not solely to be measured in terms of statistics, as one observer commented, noting that many “off-track” targets have made some progress and many people are better off than they were before 2015. What is more, the SDGs also have soft impacts that foster new practices and a more honest and open culture of addressing key sustainable development challenges.

One success story is the Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs). The overwhelming majority of Member States—191 out of 194, including the EU—have produced at least one VNR, with many reporting for the third, or even fourth time, in 2025. VNRs have evolved from what some called “tourism advertisements” in early years into a useful “peer review” format, with presentations followed by questions from other country delegates as well as Major Groups and other Stakeholders (MGoS). While some questions may be scripted and some remain unanswered, many are pointed and successful in garnering more information, even acknowledgement of less-than-ideal progress.

Governments are also becoming more concrete in their accounts of administrative or political steps taken to ingrain the SDGs in national plans and strategies and establish mechanisms for coordination and oversight. Some countries emphasized their challenges and setbacks to allow room for constructive feedback and open the door to discussing new partnerships. One observer noted that these evolving norms of transparency could be due to increasing efforts for inclusion. As governments engage more meaningfully with stakeholders, they discover that these groups can contribute innovative ideas and even resources for implementation.

Another trend is the production and inclusion of voluntary local and subnational reviews (VLRs and VSRs, respectively), often along with investments in better data collection to drive coherent, evidence-based policymaking at multiple levels. Some presenters noted this was evidence of growing local ownership of the SDGs, empowering local decision-makers, and allowing for more tailored governance, monitoring, and reporting.

It is important for HLPF itself to be an open space for non-state actors to make their voices and contributions heard. MGoS delegates were generally happy with their participation in HLPF sessions,

saying that they have a greater voice at the HLPF compared to other forums, such as the recent Fourth International Conference for Financing for Development (FfD4). Some noted that the number of civil society representatives has decreased since the COVID-19 pandemic, noting that is reflected in a lower number of side events and reduced registrations, as access into the UN building—and into the US itself, for some—became more difficult. This raises the question whether an improvement in process alone is sufficient to make HLPF more inclusive if some stakeholders are unable to access the Forum in the first place. However, those who were able to attend found increased room for participation and could make their voices heard.

Some were cautiously optimistic about financing. The OECD estimates the global annual financing gap to implement the SDGs in low and middle-income countries at USD 4 trillion, up from USD 2.5 trillion in 2022 due to higher costs of climate impacts and geopolitical uncertainty, which disproportionately affect poorer countries. But some delegations saw hope on the horizon. Many countries welcomed the positive outcome of FfD4, which includes commitments to reform the global financial architecture, support tax reforms to expand countries' fiscal space for action, and help countries with unsustainable levels of debt.

While some criticized the FfD4 outcome as being too private sector-centric, in that the private sector must focus on profit, delegates did discuss other forms of financing for achieving the SDGs, including South-South and triangular cooperation. Some also referred to China's Global Development Initiative as a viable alternative to traditional donors, although some cautioned that it might benefit some SDG targets, such as improved infrastructure, more than others, such as gender equality.

Overall, the discussion on financing reflected renewed momentum after FfD4, with some cautiously optimistic that global finance reform can succeed and many others urging rapid action as many countries face unsustainable debt burdens and risk losing hard won gains in their development.

Is it Enough?

As the 2025 HLPF began, one seasoned observer expressed the view that “the HLPF is irrelevant,” given that the 2030 Agenda is not binding, the 2030 deadline will not be met, and there are many environmental agreements that are more powerful in garnering commitments and monitoring compliance. However, more participants seemed to subscribe to the view that the HLPF represents a “glass half full rather than half empty.” Conversations within the HLPF have led to the evolution and gradual convergence of norms over time and continues to be a place about the wider linkages between multilateral agendas and overall progress towards the vision of a better world for all.

In this vein, HLPF 2025 may not have been a resounding success, but it is an important place to consider the implications of the multiple crises and geopolitical shifts that the world is experiencing. This includes not only a more serious interest in assessing the value of the SDGs at the national level, through improved VNR reporting, but also in an open exchange on how multilateral and other forms of international cooperation can move SDG implementation forward.

As the time is approaching to start thinking about what happens after 2030, many have accepted that the HLPF is advancing momentum toward sustainable development, whether or not the SDGs are met. As Secretary-General António Guterres stated when opening the Ministerial Segment of the Forum, “We must turn momentum into transformation.”

Upcoming Meetings

Second United Nations Food Systems Summit Stocktake (UNFSS+4): Co-hosted by Ethiopia and Italy, UNFSS+4 marks four years since the 2021 UN Food Systems Summit (UNFSS). Guided by the six concrete priorities of the UN Secretary-General's Call to Action from UNFSS+2, the meeting will provide a critical space to reflect on the progress made in implementing an integrated approach to food systems transformation, strengthening collaboration, and unlocking finance and investments to accelerate food systems transformation. **dates:** 27-29 July 2025 **location:** Addis Ababa, Ethiopia **www:** unfoodsystemshub.org/un-food-systems-summit-4-stocktake

First Substantive Session of INC for UN Framework Convention on International Tax Cooperation: Following the adoption of a UN General Assembly resolution establishing the open-ended intergovernmental negotiating committee (INC) for the UN Framework Convention on International Tax Cooperation in November 2024, the first substantive session will focus on developing draft texts of the framework convention and two protocols. **dates:** 4-8 August 2025 **location:** UN Headquarters, New York **www:** financing.desa.un.org/inc

Third UN Conference on LLDCs: Convening under the theme, “Driving Progress Through Partnerships,” the Third UN Conference on Landlocked Developing Countries will explore innovative solutions to challenges faced by LLDCs and build meaningful, strategic partnerships to unlock the potential of LLDCs. In advance of the Third Conference, UNGA and ECOSOC will convene a thematic event to provide input into the Conference. **dates:** 5-8 August 2025 **location:** Awaza, Turkmenistan **www:** un.org/en/landlocked

TICAD 9: Initiated by the government of Japan in 1993, the Tokyo International Conference on Development (TICAD) conferences are co-hosted by the Government of Japan, UNDP, World Bank, and the African Union Commission. TICAD 9 will address the theme “People, Planet, and Prosperity in a Changing World,” focusing on co-creating innovative solutions for Africa. **dates:** 20-22 August 2025 **location:** Yokohama, Japan **www:** mofa.go.jp/region/africa/ticad/ticad9/index.html

Fourth Intra-African Trade Fair (IATF 2025): Co-organized by African Export-Import Bank, the African Union Commission, and the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) Secretariat, IATF2025 aims to boost intra-African trade in order to foster industrialization, promote value addition, create jobs, and enhance Africa's competitiveness on the global stage. **dates:** 4-10 September 2025 **location:** Algiers, Algeria **www:** 2025.iatf.africa/newfront

13th International Conference on Sustainable Development (ICSD): Co-organized by the European Center for Sustainable Development and the Canadian Institute of Technology, the hybrid conference will address the theme, “Creating a Unified Foundation for Sustainable Development: Research, Practice, and Education.” ICSD 2025 will focus on three themes: economic sustainability, environmental sustainability, and sociocultural sustainability. **dates:** 10-11 September 2025 **location:** Rome, Italy, and online **www:** ecsdev.org/conference/13th-icsd-2025

UNGA High-level Meeting on the 30th Anniversary of the Fourth World Conference on Women: The meeting will focus on the theme, “Recommitting to, resourcing and accelerating the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action

to achieve gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls.” **date:** 22 September 2025 **location:** UN Headquarters, New York **www:** docs.un.org/A/79/L.81

Global Goals Week: Held in parallel to the UNGA, the Global Goals Week is a shared commitment among more than 170 supporters across civil society, business, academia, and the UN system to accelerate action on SDGs, by speaking out in one voice, and sharing ideas and transformative solutions in the fight to build back better from global challenges. **dates:** 20-29 September 2025 **location:** UN Headquarters and New York, New York **www:** globalgoalsweek.org/about

New Economies - Hope in a Time of Collapse: Hosted by Partners for a New Economy, the event is the fourth in a series that aims to build connections for strategic action across geographies, disciplines, and sectors while exploring new economic ideas, practices, and strategies to build power and respond with urgency to complex challenges. **dates:** 1-2 October 2025 **location:** Lyon, France **www:** p4neinlyon.org

IUCN World Conservation Congress: Held every four years, the IUCN Congress is the world’s largest conservation event and focuses on the world’s most pressing environmental and development challenges, and actions to address them. The Congress will bring together IUCN’s government, civil society, and Indigenous Peoples’ member organizations to explore solutions to the triple planetary crisis of biodiversity loss, climate change, and pollution and set the course towards achieving the goals in the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF). **dates:** 9-15 October 2025 **location:** Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates **www:** iucncongress2025.org

Second World Summit for Social Development: Convening at the level of Heads of State and Government, the Summit aims to address the gaps and recommit to the Copenhagen Declaration on Social Development and the Programme of Action, agreed at the First World Summit on Social Development in 1995, and provide momentum towards the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. **dates:** 4-6 November 2025 **location:** Doha, Qatar **www:** social.desa.un.org/second-world-summit-for-social-development

16th Meeting of the Inter-agency and Expert Group on SDG Indicators: The UN Statistical Commission established the IAEG-SDGs to develop an indicator framework for the monitoring of the SDGs and targets of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development at the global level and to support its implementation. The meeting will comprise a members-only meeting during the first day, followed by plenary sessions open to countries, international and regional agencies and entities, and other stakeholders. **dates:** 5-7 November 2025 **location:** Kitakyushu, Japan **www:** unstats.un.org/sdgs/meetings/iaeg-sdgs-meeting-16

2025 UN Climate Change Conference (UNFCCC COP 30): This event will include the 30th session of the Conference of the Parties to the UNFCCC (COP 30), the 20th meeting of the COP serving as the Meeting of the Parties to the Kyoto Protocol (CMP 20), and the seventh meeting of the COP serving as the Meeting of the Parties to the Paris Agreement (CMA 7). **dates:** 10-21 November 2025 **location:** Belém, Brazil **www:** unfccc.int/cop30

Seventh Meeting of the UN Environment Assembly (UNEA-7): UNEA is the highest decision-making body on environmental matters in the UN system and has a universal membership of all 193 Member States. The Assembly sets the global environmental agenda, provides overarching policy guidance, and defines policy responses to address emerging environmental challenges. UNEA-7 will address the theme, “Advancing Sustainable Solutions for a

Resilient Planet.” UNEA-7 will be preceded by the seventh meeting of the Open-ended Committee of Permanent Representatives (OECPR-7) which will be held from 1-5 December 2025. **dates:** 8-12 December 2025 **location:** Nairobi, Kenya **www:** unep.org/environmentalassembly/unea7

HLPF 2026: The next session of the HLPF convening under the theme “Transformative, equitable, innovative and coordinated actions for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its SDGs for a sustainable future for all,” will focus on the following 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). **dates:** 6-15 July 2026 (TBC) **location:** UN Headquarters, New York **www:** hlpf.un.org

For additional upcoming events, see sdg.iisd.org

Glossary

AI	Artificial intelligence
DESA	UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs
ECA	UN Economic Commission for Africa
ESCAP	UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific
ESCWA	UN Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia
ECOSOC	UN Economic and Social Council
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the UN
FfD4	Fourth International Conference on Financing for Development
GDP	Gross domestic product
HLPF	High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development
ILO	International Labour Organization
LDCs	Least developed countries
LLDCs	Landlocked developing countries
MGoS	Major Groups and other Stakeholders
MICs	Middle-income countries
ODA	Official development assistance
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SIDS	Small island developing states
STI	Science, Technology and Innovation
UNCLOS	UN Convention on the Law of the Sea
UNGA	UN General Assembly
UNOC3	Third United Nations Ocean Conference
VNR	Voluntary National Review
WSSD 2	Second World Summit on Social Development