HLPF

BACKGROUND GUIDE

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Director-General
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Delegate Experience
Nastasja Vásquez

Global Partnerships
Daniela Maciel
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Under-Secretaries-General
Nachiketh Anand
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Naina Dhawan
Ximena Faz
Kellie Fernandez
Grace Harb
Adiva Ara Khan
Anshul Magal
Analucia Tello
Sofia Velasco
Renata Venzor

Hello Delegates,

I welcome you to NHSMUN 2025 and the High-Level Political Forum (HLPF)! My name is Manuel Enríquez, and I am honored to be your Committee Director for Session I. I have dedicated considerable time and effort to crafting this background paper alongside my co-director Cristina, hoping it will serve as a strong foundation for a fruitful and engaging debate. We have set high expectations for the level of discussion in our committee, and we are eager to hear the innovative and thoughtful ideas that each of you will bring to the table.

To share a bit about myself, I am currently studying Public Policy, Economics, and Data Science at Tecnológico de Monterrey, in México. In addition, I have had the opportunity to work with companies on economic consulting strategies, focusing on the vital role of institutions in shaping the economy. My passion for these subjects is closely tied to my enthusiasm for the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the work of the HLPF. I am genuinely excited to learn from you all and witness the diverse perspectives you will contribute to our discussions.

My connection with NHSMUN runs deep. I first attended as a delegate in 2019, an experience that profoundly influenced my academic and career choices. Over three years as a delegate, NHSMUN became the highlight of my Model United Nations journey, and this committee will be equally impactful for you. I encourage each of you to embrace this experience fully. MUN offers a unique opportunity to engage with complex global issues, develop critical thinking skills, and form lasting connections with fellow delegates worldwide.

I hope that you find the background paper Cristina and I have prepared to be informative and thought-provoking. We have designed it to guide your research and challenge you to explore new ideas and perspectives. Engaging deeply with the material will enrich our debates, leading to a truly rewarding experience.

Once again, welcome to NHSMUN 2025 and HLPF. I look forward to meeting you and embarking on this exciting journey together.

Kind Regards,
Manuel Enríquez
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High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development
Session I

NHSMUN
National High School Model United Nations

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Dear Delegates,

I am pleased to welcome you to NHSMUN 2025 and the High-Level Political Forum (HLPF)! My name is Cristina Alfonzo, and I am delighted to be your Director for Session II. Manuel and I have high expectations for debate, and we are looking forward to well-funded solutions in March, as we have worked demandingly to prepare this Background Guide.

I have participated in Model UN for about six years. Four of these are as a delegate, and two are as a faculty advisor. Dedicating my weekdays and weekends to helping others find what I see in Model UN is what I love doing the most. When I went to my first Model UN conference at 12 years old, I remember being so nervous that I started shaking while stating my first speech. Looking back, I realize that Model UN helped me overcome my biggest fears. Participating in Model UN has impacted my personal and academic development favorably. This has also helped me build confidence while developing skills like public speaking, diplomacy, writing, negotiation, and solidarity. Even though Model UN is a very demanding activity, I keep looking for more spaces in which debate is key. This led to me choosing my major! I'm a second-year Law and Liberal Studies student at Universidad Metropolitana de Caracas, Venezuela. NHSMUN is an experience that taught me that everyone is human. Being nervous or anxious in a conference happens to all of us, so making mistakes and learning from them is something only humans like you and me can do. So, keep this advice: don't feel bad about feeling nervous; everyone is too.

Even though Model UN is essential to what I like doing, I also enjoy other hobbies. I love listening to music. I don't have a preference, so I'm willing to try any music genre! I also like reading books with historical and political themes. I'm currently reading "How democracies die" by Steven Levitsky and Daniel Ziblatt. I'm probably baking, drinking coffee, or rewatching my favorite Studio Ghibli movies when I'm not studying.

As mentioned, this Background Guide will help you dive deeper into the topic and guide your research as you prepare for debate. Even though this Background Guide may present a lot of necessary information, I encourage you to be ambitious. Stay updated, be bold, and give the last push! It is your job to evaluate previous actions taken, study their movements, and propose new alternatives to these solutions. As the conference date gets nearer and any questions emerge, please contact me.

I am looking forward to meeting all of you!

Best wishes,
Cristina Alfonzo
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High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development
Session II

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A Note on the NHSMUN Difference

Esteemed Faculty and Delegates,

Welcome to NHSMUN 2025! We are Terry Wang and Jordan Baker, and we are this year's Secretary-General and Director-General. Thank you for choosing to attend NHSMUN, the world's largest and most diverse Model United Nations conference for secondary school students. We are thrilled to welcome you to New York City in March.

As a space for collaboration, consensus, and compromise, NHSMUN strives to transform today's brightest thinkers, speakers, and collaborators into tomorrow's leaders. Our organization provides a uniquely tailored experience for all through innovative and accessible programming. We believe that an emphasis on education through simulation is paramount to the Model UN experience, and this idea permeates throughout numerous aspects of the conference:

Realism and accuracy: Although a perfect simulation of the UN is never possible, we believe that one of the core educational responsibilities of MUN conferences is to educate students about how the UN System works. Each NHSMUN committee is a simulation of a real deliberative body so that delegates can research what their country has said in the committee. Our topics are chosen from the issues currently on the agenda of that committee (except historical committees, which take topics from the appropriate time period). We also strive to invite real UN, NGO, and field experts into each committee through our committee speakers program. Moreover, we arrange meetings between students and the actual UN Permanent Mission of the country they are representing. Our delegates have the incredible opportunity to conduct first-hand research, asking thought-provoking questions to current UN representatives and experts in their respective fields of study. These exclusive resources are only available due to IMUNA's formal association with the United Nations Department of Global Communications and consultative status with the Economic and Social Council. No other conference goes so far to deeply immerse students into the UN System.

Educational emphasis, even for awards: At the heart of NHSMUN lies education and compromise. Part of what makes NHSMUN so special is its diverse delegate base. As such, when NHSMUN distributes awards, we strongly de-emphasize their importance in comparison to the educational value of Model UN as an activity. NHSMUN seeks to reward students who excel in the arts of compromise and diplomacy. More importantly, we seek to develop an environment in which delegates can employ their critical thought processes and share ideas with their counterparts from around the world. Given our delegates' plurality of perspectives and experiences, we center our programming around the values of diplomacy and teamwork. In particular, our daises look for and promote constructive leadership that strives towards consensus, as real ambassadors do in the United Nations.

Debate founded on strong knowledge and accessibility: With knowledgeable staff members and delegates from over 70 countries, NHSMUN can facilitate an enriching experience reliant on substantively rigorous debate. To ensure this high quality of debate, our staff members produce detailed, accessible, and comprehensive topic guides (like the one below) to prepare delegates for the nuances inherent in each global issue. This process takes over six months, during which the Directors who lead our committees develop their topics with the valuable input of expert contributors. Because these topics are always changing and evolving, NHSMUN also produces update papers intended to bridge the gap of time between when the background guides are published and when committee starts in March. As such, this guide is designed to be a launching point from which delegates should delve further into their topics. The detailed knowledge that our Directors provide in this background guide through diligent research aims to increase critical thinking within delegates at NHSMUN.

Extremely engaged staff: At NHSMUN, our staffers care deeply about delegates' experiences and what they take away from their time at NHSMUN. Before the conference, our Directors and Assistant Directors are trained rigorously through hours of workshops and exercises both virtual and in-person to provide the best conference experience possible. At the conference,

delegates will have the opportunity to meet their dais members prior to the first committee session, where they may engage one-on-one to discuss their committees and topics. Our Directors and Assistant Directors are trained and empowered to be experts on their topics and they are always available to rapidly answer any questions delegates may have prior to the conference. Our Directors and Assistant Directors read every position paper submitted to NHSMUN and provide thoughtful comments on those submitted by the feedback deadline. Our staff aims not only to tailor the committee experience to delegates' reflections and research but also to facilitate an environment where all delegates' thoughts can be heard.

Empowering participation: The UN relies on the voices of all of its member states to create resolutions most likely to make a meaningful impact on the world. That is our philosophy at NHSMUN too. We believe that to properly delve into an issue and produce fruitful debate, it is crucial to focus the entire energy and attention of the room on the topic at hand. Our Rules of Procedure and our staff focus on making every voice in the committee heard, regardless of each delegate's country assignment or skill level. Additionally, unlike many other conferences, we also emphasize delegate participation after the conference. MUN delegates are well researched and aware of the UN's priorities, and they can serve as the vanguard for action on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Therefore, we are proud to connect students with other action-oriented organizations to encourage further work on the topics.

Focused committee time: We feel strongly that face-to-face interpersonal connections during debate are critical to producing superior committee experiences and allow for the free flow of ideas. Ensuring policies based on equality and inclusion is one way in which NHSMUN guarantees that every delegate has an equal opportunity to succeed in committee. In order to allow communication and collaboration to be maximized during committee, we have a very dedicated administrative team who work throughout the conference to type up, format, and print draft resolutions and working papers.

As always, we welcome any questions or concerns about the substantive program at NHSMUN 2025 and would be happy to discuss NHSMUN pedagogy with faculty or delegates.

Delegates, it is our sincerest hope that your time at NHSMUN will be thought-provoking and stimulating. NHSMUN is an incredible time to learn, grow, and embrace new opportunities. We look forward to seeing you work both as students and global citizens at the conference.

Best,

Terry Wang   Jordan Baker
Secretary-General   Director-General

A Note on Research and Preparation

Delegate research and preparation is a critical element of attending NHSMUN and enjoying the debate experience. We have provided this Background Guide to introduce the topics that will be discussed in your committee. We encourage and expect each of you to critically explore the selected topics and be able to identify and analyze their intricacies upon arrival to NHSMUN in March.

The task of preparing for the conference can be challenging, but to assist delegates, we have updated our **Beginner Delegate Guide** and **Advanced Delegate Guide**. In particular, these guides contain more detailed instructions on how to prepare a position paper and excellent sources that delegates can use for research. Use these resources to your advantage. They can help transform a sometimes overwhelming task into what it should be: an engaging, interesting, and rewarding experience.

To accurately represent a country, delegates must be able to articulate its policies. Accordingly, NHSMUN requires each delegation (the one or two delegates representing a country in a committee) to write a position paper for each topic on the committee's agenda. In delegations with two students, we strongly encourage each student to research each topic to ensure that they are prepared to debate no matter which topic is selected first. More information about how to write and format position papers can be found in the NHSMUN Research Guide. To summarize, position papers should be structured into three sections:

I: Topic Background – This section should describe the history of the topic as it would be described by the delegate's country. Delegates do not need to give an exhaustive account of the topic, but rather focus on the details that are most important to the delegation's policy and proposed solutions.

II: Country Policy – This section should discuss the delegation's policy regarding the topic. Each paper should state the policy in plain terms and include the relevant statements, statistics, and research that support the effectiveness of the policy. Comparisons with other global issues are also appropriate here.

III. Proposed Solutions – This section should detail the delegation's proposed solutions to address the topic. Descriptions of each solution should be thorough. Each idea should clearly connect to the specific problem it aims to solve and identify potential obstacles to implementation and how they can be avoided. The solution should be a natural extension of the country's policy.

Each topic's position paper should be **no more than 10 pages** long double-spaced with standard margins and font size. **We recommend 3–5 pages per topic as a suitable length**. The paper must be written from the perspective of your assigned country and should articulate the policies you will espouse at the conference.

Each delegation is responsible for sending a copy of its papers to their committee Directors via myDais on or before **February 21, 2025**. If a delegate wishes to receive detailed feedback from the committee's dais, a position must be submitted on or before **January 31, 2025**. The papers received by this earlier deadline will be reviewed by the dais of each committee and returned prior to your arrival at the conference.

Complete instructions for how to submit position papers will be sent to faculty advisers via email. If delegations are unable to submit their position papers on time, please contact us at info@imuna.org.

Delegations that do not submit position papers will be <u>ineligible</u> for awards.

Committee History

In 1987, the World Commission on Environment and Development presented a new concept to frame multiple dimensions of sustainable development across the globe. Still, it took several years until the outcome document of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, *The Future We Want*, finally delineated the three dimensions of sustainable development: economic, social, and environmental. These steps were milestones on the path towards the adoption of the *2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* (2015), and the High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF).[1] In 1992, following the UN Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED), the UN General Assembly established HLPF's predecessor, the Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD), to monitor the outputs of UNCED.[2] The CSD, while responsible for keeping sustainable development a key discussion point, failed to coordinate the sharing of knowledge and the best practices to protect against new and emerging global issues.[3] In 2012, the UN Conference on Sustainable Development established the HLPF to build on the experience of the CSD and replace it. Due to the inefficient nature of the CSD, the HLPF was introduced to have a stronger emphasis on integration and accountability. The purpose of the HLPF was to "follow up on the implementation of sustainable development and avoid overlap with existing structures, bodies, and entities in a cost-effective manner," providing a more structured and inclusive space for member states, civil society, and other stakeholders to collaborate, with a focus on avoiding overlaps with existing structures. This led to more streamlined implementation and reporting mechanisms, as well as a stronger focus on the most urgent issues, such as poverty eradication, climate action, and institutional strengthening. In 2015, the General Assembly adopted the 2030 Agenda, including the 17 SDGs and 169 associated targets.[4]

In recent years, the HLPF has aimed to reinstate the United Nations' seventeen development goals post-COVID-19. After the virus spread, much of the U.N.'s ability to address the goals previously prioritized at the 2015 UN Sustainable Development Summit has been hindered due to focus on the pandemic.[5] Now that the disease is under better control, leaders at the HLPF hope to pick up where they left off in their progress. The forum hopes to continue "eradicating poverty" through "the effective delivery of sustainable, resilient and innovative solutions," according to the HLPF's 2024 thematic review. Progress has already been made on this.[6] In the spring of 2024, discussions were held at the United Nations headquarters in New York, centering around sustainable development goal number one: No poverty.

In May 2024, further discussions were held in New York organized by the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN-DESA) and the International Development Law Organization (IDLO) to have a high-level conference surrounding Sustainable Development Goal number 16: Peace, justice, and strong institutions. The conference included "representatives of governments, international organizations, civil society, academia, and youth" brought forth to discuss the importance of handling crises to promote world security as well as the impact it will have on the future.[7] The U.N.'s secretary general, António Guterres, addressed the committee of the 16th SDG, emphasizing the importance of stabilizing the regions of Gaza and Ukraine to work towards developing the SDGs.

Moving forward, it is the responsibility of the HLPF to address these crises in a manner that is equitable, secure, and successful.

1   ILO, Newsletter October 12, No. 32, 2012; UN DESA, Sustainable Development Knowledge Platform – United Nations System; UN General Assembly, The Future We Want (A/RES/66/288), 2012.
2   Faye. (2024, July 12). CSD closes after 20 years. SDG Knowledge Hub. https://sdg.iisd.org/news/csd-closes-after-20-years/.
3   ILO, Newsletter October 12, No. 32, 2012; UN DESA, Sustainable Development Knowledge Platform – United Nations System; UN General Assembly, The Future We Want (A/RES/66/288), 2012.
4   UN General Assembly, Lessons learned from the Commission on Sustainable Development: Report of the Secretary-General (A/67/757), 2012 ILO, Newsletter October 12, No. 32, 2012; UN DESA, Sustainable Development Knowledge Platform – United Nations System; UN General Assembly, The Future We Want (A/RES/66/288), 2012.
5   High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development – HLPF | IISD Earth Negotiations Bulletin. (n.d.). IISD Earth Negotiations Bulletin, https://enb.iisd.org/negotiations/high-level-political-forum-sustainable-development-hlpf.
6   Expert Group Meetings for 2024 HLPF Thematic Review | Department of Economic and Social Affairs. (n.d.). https://sdgs.un.org/HLPF/2024/ThematicReviewEGMs.
7   SDG16 Conference 2024. (2024, May 24). IDLO - International Development Law Organization. https://www.idlo.int/SDG16Conference2024.

The committee has a unique opportunity to coordinate international efforts, sharing knowledge and best practices to ensure stability while avoiding mistakes of the past. The SDGs, established by the 2030 Agenda, are more than just targets - they are a roadmap for fostering economic growth, reducing inequality, and combating climate change.[8] In the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, the quality of recent conferences has displayed that progress is possible; the HLPF can help shape a future where sustainable solutions are discussed and implemented.

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8   Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development | Department of Economic and Social Affairs. (n.d.). https://sdgs. un.org/2030agenda.

TOPIC A: SETTING THE 2045 AGENDA FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Introduction

The High-Level Political Forum (HLPF) on Sustainable Development is critical in guiding the world's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). As we near 2030, the United Nations and its member states face new challenges while building on past successes. The HLPF is the leading platform for reviewing and reforming the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The goal is to create a fairer and more sustainable world.

This committee will focus on the role of the 2030 Agenda and review its implementation globally. This agenda prioritizes action for people, prosperity, and the planet. One primary task is to eradicate poverty in all of its forms.[1] To achieve this goal, all countries and people must work together. This plan also intends to strengthen universal peace and promote freedom globally. The 2030 Agenda seeks to address everyone's needs. The current political landscape poses large issues for sustainable development. This includes the rise in poverty amongst billions of people and increases in health and climate threats.[2] Furthermore, there is a universal rise in inequality, with gender inequality playing a large role. The improper distribution of wealth and power with youth unemployment is also a major concern.[3] These are among the few challenges that all countries must address by this committee. It is also important to note the progress made by the SDGs so far. Throughout the years, millions of people have escaped extreme poverty.

Additionally, access to education has increased for both boys and girls.[4] Furthermore, the interconnected global community has allowed a flow of resources, information, and technology to circulate. These advancements have been key in uplifting impoverished communities.[5] Analyzing the successes and failures of the SDGs is key to passing more effective solutions in the future. The 17 Sustainable Development Goals show the scope of the new global agenda. They aim to improve and fill the gaps left by the Millennium Development Goals. This agenda aims to empower all women and girls, establish gender equality, and bolster human rights. The three main categories of sustainable development include the economy, society, and the environment. These categories overlap and are addressed by the nature of the SDGs.[6] The HLPF must address these challenges with an updated focus, ensuring the agenda is inclusive, flexible, and aligned with the future. The 2030 Agenda offers a chance to reshape global priorities, strengthen cooperation, and promote sustainable development that benefits everyone and the planet. The HLPF's role in setting this agenda will be crucial for addressing inequality in the future.

History and Description of the Issue

Millennium Development Goals

In the 1960s, the UN began to focus on global development.[7] As globalism increased during the 20th century, so did economic growth and inequality. Globalization revealed the lasting effects of colonization, which resulted in underdevelopment.[8] The debate between economic growth and economic

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1 "Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development," United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs Sustainable Development, accessed September 2, 2024, https://sdgs.un.org/2030agenda.
2 "Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development," United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs Sustainable Development.
3 "Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development," United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs Sustainable Development.
4 "Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development," United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs Sustainable Development.
5 "Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development," United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs Sustainable Development.
6 "Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development," United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs Sustainable Development.
7 Peter Jackson, "A Prehistory of the Millennium Development Goals: Four Decades of Struggle for Development in the United Nations," *UN Chronicle*, accessed July 19, 2024, https://www.un.org/en/chronicle/article/prehistory-millennium-development-goals-four-decades-struggle-development-united-nations.
8 Angus Madison, "The World Economy in the Second Half of the Twentieth Century," *The World Economy*, Volume 1: A Millennial Perspective and Volume 2: Historical Statistics, (September 2006): 125–67, https://doi.org/10.1787/9789264022621-5-en.

development grew considerably: should the focus be on increasing income or on improving people's well-being?[9] By the end of the century, efforts to fight inequality and poverty grew. This is seen through developing countries and civil society becoming stronger.[10] However, a clear plan to solve existing issues still needs to be developed. The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) were an attempt to refocus on development at the start of the 21st century. The UN created the MDGs at the Millennium Summit to advance the poorest countries' social and economic development.[11] The MDGs were objectives set to be achieved by 2015 to ensure global integration for development.[12] The Millennium Declaration and the MDGs agreed on human dignity, equality, peace, and UN strengthening.[13] The MDGs consisted of eight main goals and 21 targets, which 191 UN member states and 22 international organizations committed to.[14]

The MDGs focused on human capital, rights, and infrastructure. Some objectives included access to safe drinking water, energy, information technology, and political participation. The UN called the MDGs the "most successful anti-poverty movement in history," as they saw much progress between 2000 and 2015.[15] The first goal consisted of the eradication of extreme poverty and hunger. Extreme poverty declined from 1.9 billion in 1990 to 836 million in 2015.[16] The goal also included achieving productive and sufficient employment. Even though employment fell between 1990 and 2015, there was an increase in salary as the proportion of

workers in extreme poverty fell.[17] Additionally, the number of undernourished people in developing countries went from 23 percent in 1991 to 13 percent in 2015.[18] The second goal of the MDGs ensured that, by 2015, all children could complete primary school. The primary school enrollment rate in developing countries reached 91 percent in 2015, compared with 83 percent in 2000.[19] Furthermore, the number of out-of-school children almost halved by the end of the MDG period.

Nonetheless, primary school enrollment has yet to reach 100 percent. The third goal was to promote gender equality and empower women. Even though two-thirds of developing countries achieved gender parity in primary education, inequalities are still seen in higher education. Women remain disadvantaged in the labor market and the political climate.[20] The fourth and fifth goals are focused on reducing child mortality and improving maternal healthcare. The global under-five mortality rate declined from 90 to 43 deaths per thousand births. Secondly, skilled health personnel assisted 71 percent of births globally, up from 59 percent in 1990. However, progress was not distributed equally, and those with economic disadvantages remained vulnerable.[21] Isolated populations were often left vulnerable due to a lack of targeted policies.[22] The sixth goal was combating HIV/AIDS, malaria, and other diseases. The MDGs and various international campaigns reduced new HIV infections by 40 percent between 2000 and 2013. There was also an increase in HIV patients in

9   National Institute of Open Schooling, *Economic Growth and Economic Development* (National Institute of Open Schooling, accessed August 10, 2024) https://nios.ac.in/media/documents/SrSec318NEW/318_Economics_Eng/318_Economics_Eng_Lesson3.pdf
10   IMF Staff. "Global Trade Liberalization and the Developing Countries." International Monetary Fund, last modified November 2001, https://www.imf.org/external/np/exr/ib/2001/110801.htm
11   Peter Jackson, "A Prehistory of the Millennium Development Goals: Four Decades of Struggle for Development in the United Nations," *UN Chronicle*, accessed July 19, 2024,
12   Jackson, "A Prehistory of the Millennium Development Goals: Four Decades of Struggle for Development in the United Nations."
13   United Nations General Assembly, Resolution 55/2, United Nations Millennium Declaration, A/RES/55/2 (September 18, 2022), https://www.un.org/en/development/desa/population/migration/generalassembly/docs/globalcompact/A_RES_55_2.pdf
14   Joseph E. Aldy, Joseph E. Stiglitz, and Peter R. Orszag, "Climate Change: An Agenda for Global Collective Action," *Brookings*, October 15, 2001, https://www.brookings.edu/articles/climate-change-an-agenda-for-global-collective-action/.
15   Peter Jackson, "A Prehistory of the Millennium Development Goals: Four Decades of Struggle for Development in the United Nations," *UN Chronicle*, accessed July 19, 2024, https://www.un.org/en/chronicle/article/prehistory-millennium-development-goals-four-decades-struggle-development-united-nations.
16   United Nations, *The Millennium Development Goals Report 2015* (New York: United Nations, 2015), https://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/2015_MDG_Report/pdf/MDG%202015%20rev%20(July%201).pdf.
17   United Nations, *The Millennium Development Goals Report 2015.*
18   United Nations, *The Millennium Development Goals Report 2015.*
19   United Nations, *The Millennium Development Goals Report 2015.*
20   United Nations, *The Millennium Development Goals Report 2015.*
21   United Nations, *The Millennium Development Goals Report 2015.*
22   Jeffrey Alwang, Paul Siegel, Steen Jorgensen, *Vulnerability: A View from Different Disciplines,* (Washington: World Bank, 2001), https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/636921468765021121/pdf/multi0page.pdf

Secretary Kerry Participates in the Millennium Development Goals Event

Credit: U.S. Department of State

antiretroviral therapy, from 800,000 people in 2003 to 13.6 million.[23] The third target aimed to halve rates of malaria and other major diseases by 2015. Between 2000 and 2015, malaria incidence fell 37 percent.

Additionally, the rate of tuberculosis infections decreased through effective prevention, diagnosis, and treatment.[24] The seventh goal focuses on environmental sustainability. At the end of the 19th century and the start of the 20th century, the global agenda needed to recognize climate change. Significant contributors like the United States and Russia did not accept the Kyoto Protocol.[25] Additionally, corporations like ExxonMobil opposed the protocol, with company executives convinced that global warming did not exist. This skepticism was echoed by initiatives like the "Oregon Petition," the Oregon Institute of Science and Medicine organized. The petition, signed by 39 climatologists and over 31,400 others, questioned the existence of human-made global warming.[26] Surrounded by this skeptical environment, the United Nations

centered the first target around sustainable development. Fortunately, an international consensus is now seen regarding the existence and threats of climate change. However, there remains a disagreement about how and when to address this threat.[27] Nonetheless, the MDGs did not achieve a reduction in emissions, as they continued to grow between 2000 and 2015.[28]

The eighth and last MDG aimed to develop a global partnership for development. The targets included inclusion in international trade, debt relief for developing countries, and increased interconnectivity through the Internet. Official assistance for developing countries increased 66 percent from 2000 to 2014. Regarding trade, 79 percent of imports from developing to developed countries were exempt from tariffs. Finally, in 2015, 95 percent of the world's population had access to a mobile cellular signal.[29]

The MDGs faced criticism for several reasons. First, the development process was heavily criticized by the academic

23   United Nations, *The Millennium Development Goals Report 2015.*
24   United Nations, *The Millennium Development Goals Report 2015.*
25   Sarah Childress, "Timeline: The Politics of Climate Change," *FRONTLINE*, October 24, 2012, https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/frontline/article/timeline-the-politics-of-climate-change/.
26   Sander Van Der Linden, et al, "Inoculating the Public Against Misinformation About Climate Change," *Global Challenges* 1, no. 2 (January, 2017), https://doi.org/10.1002/gch2.201600008.
27   Joseph E. Aldy, Joseph E. Stiglitz, and Peter R. Orszag, "Climate Change: An Agenda for Global Collective Action," *Brookings*, October 15, 2001, https://www.brookings.edu/articles/climate-change-an-agenda-for-global-collective-action/.
28   United Nations, *The Millennium Development Goals Report 2015* (New York: United Nations, 2015), https://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/2015_MDG_Report/pdf/MDG%202015%20rev%20(July%201).pdf.
29   United Nations, *The Millennium Development Goals Report 2015.*

community. The United States, Japan, and Europe mainly drove the process. For instance, a Japanese representative blocked broader targets within the gender goal.[30] The Vatican and the conservative Islamic States influenced the rejection of a reproductive health goal.[31] Only 22 percent of the world's national parliaments discussed the MDGs. This is because developing countries needed more involvement in their creation.[32] The lack of ownership, commitment, poor governance, conflicts, and a failure to localize goals contributed to the MDGs' failure in many developing regions.[33]

Second, the MDGs were considered overambitious and unrealistic for low and middle-income countries. Experts felt the chosen goals needed more analytical power and justification.[34] The MDG framework also did not consider national baselines, contexts, and the capacity for implementation. They failed to address inequalities. In prosperous countries like China or India, income inequalities increased, and poverty decline was uneven across different social groups.[35] Progress was slow in Africa, and initial successes were often limited.[36] Violence and war also hindered MDG achievement. Afghanistan was one of the countries with the most minor success towards the MDGs. It suffered from prolonged conflict and instability.[37] In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, ongoing conflicts led to 13 million people needing assistance and 4.5 million being internally displaced. These crises greatly hindered the MDG's progress.[38] Lastly, MDG evaluation relied heavily on private

organizations, which affected transparency and accountability.

Additionally, the creation of the goals required data from 189 countries. However, many governments struggled to provide or update this information, which slowed progress.[39] While the MDGs made progress, they needed to be more consistent. In 2011, nearly 60 percent of the world's one billion impoverished people lived in five countries. Former UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon emphasized that further progress would require political will and a collective, long-term effort. These were needed to create a world of dignity for all.[40] Among the recommendations, Ban Ki-Moon called for accelerated efforts toward partnership between governments, the private sector, and civil society to address global challenges.[41]

Transition to SDGs

The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) provided a framework for creating the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which started after the MDGs ended in December 2015. A key takeaway was that countries are more successful when their goals align with existing priorities. Local governments must also be involved to make the SDGs more effective.[42] The United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development "Rio+20" occurred in Brazil in 2012. This conference produced clear steps for sustainable development, which became the SDGs.[43] The conference held participants worldwide, including 192 UN Member States and over 100

30 Maya Fehling, Brett D. Nelson, and Sridhar Venkatapuram, "Limitations of the Millennium Development Goals: A Literature Review," *Global Public Health* 8, no. 10 (November 2013): 1109–22, https://doi.org/10.1080/17441692.2013.845676.
31 David Hulme, "Lessons From the Making of the MDGs: Human Development Meets Results-based Management in an Unfair World," *IDS Bulletin* 41, no. 1 (January 1, 2010): 15–25, https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1759-5436.2010.00099.x.
32 Fabienne Richard et al., "Sub-Saharan Africa and the Health MDGs: The Need to Move Beyond the 'Quick Impact' Model," *Reproductive Health Matters* 19, no. 38 (January 1, 2011): 42–55, https://doi.org/10.1016/s0968-8080(11)38579-5.
33 Naila Kabeer, *Can the MDGs provide a pathway to social justice? The challenge of intersecting inequalities* (United Kingdom: Institute of Development Studies, 2010) https://www.ids.ac.uk/download.php?file=files/dmfile/MDGreportwebsiteu2WC.pdf.
34 Séverine Deneulin and Lila Shahani, *An Introduction to the Human Development and Capability Approach.* (Ottawa: Human Development and Capability Association, 2009) https://idl-bnc-idrc.dspacedirect.org/server/api/core/bitstreams/32d4a0e0-8ae6-4a2a-b839-5ce98159b515/content.
35 Naila Kabeer, *Can the MDGs provide a pathway to social justice? The challenge of intersecting inequalities.*
36 Anuoluwapo Abosede Durokifa and Edwin Chikata Ijeoma, "Neo-colonialism and Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) in Africa: A Blend of an Old Wine in a New Bottle," *African Journal of Science, Technology, Innovation and Development* 10, no. 3 (April 16, 2018): 355–66, https://doi.org/10.1080/20421338.2018.1463654.
37 Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, *Afghanistan Millennium Development Goals Report 2010*, (Afghanistan: 2010): https://planipolis.iiep.unesco.org/sites/default/files/ressources/afghanistan_mdg_2010.pdf.
38 "Democratic Republic of Congo," OXFAM, accessed July 19, 2024, https://heca.oxfam.org/countries/democratic-republic-congo.
39 "About Millennium Development Goals," MDG Monitor, accessed July 19, 2024, https://www.mdgmonitor.org/about-mdg/.
40 United Nations, *The Millennium Development Goals Report 2015*
41 "Opening remarks by Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon", United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, accessed September 15, 2024, https://sdgs.un.org/statements/opening-remarks-secretary-general-ban-ki-moon-8608.
42 Moizza Binat, *National MDG Implementation: Lessons for the SDGs Era*, London: Overseas Development Institute (November, 2015): https://media.odi.org/documents/10003.pdf.
43 United Nations General Assembly, Resolution 66/288, The Future We Want, A/RES/66/288 (Jul. 27, 2012), https://www.un.org/en/development/desa/population/migration/generalassembly/docs/globalcompact/A_RES_66_288.pdf

heads of state and government.

Furthermore, delegates and representatives from NGOs, civil society, and voluntary groups on sustainable development attended.[44] The meeting focused on Agenda 21 from the 1992 Earth Summit. This agenda outlined the global environmental plans for the next 20 years.[45] The UN also aimed for Rio+20 to endorse a "green economy roadmap." However, countries preferred creating new SDGs to protect the environment, ensure food and power for the poorest, and reduce poverty.[46] Rio+20 ended with a non-binding document called "The Future We Want," which called for the implementation of the SDGs.[47] This illustrated a significant difference between the MDGs and SDGs, where developing countries had a stronger role in setting the new agenda. During Rio+20, leaders recognized that changing consumption and production patterns was essential for global sustainable development.[48] The resulting document outlined three main areas for sustainable development: economic, social, and environmental. It also highlighted the connections between these three areas. It recognized that ending poverty is one of the world's biggest challenges. It also emphasized the importance of involving civil society and other social groups in implementing the SDGs.[49] Nonetheless, some civil society leaders criticized the agreement through "The Rio+20 We Don't Want", which called the original document weak.[50]

Experts said the focus on "sustained economic growth" went against sustainable development. Critics argued that focusing on economic growth first, rather than development, would increase inequality.[51] More scholars would need to take a more active role in the discussions to address this.

After the Rio+20 Conference, the UN began consultations with civil society and other groups. The Open Working Group (OWG) organized 13 sessions and 85 formal meetings.[52] The OWG also connected to civil society through the online platform "The World We Want."[53] Moreover, the OWG provided a synthesis report summarizing its findings. The report recognized poverty eradication as the biggest challenge. It also highlighted the necessity of promoting sustainable conduct and managing natural resources. The document contained a more comprehensive and holistic view of the global agenda than the MDGs[54]. However, the OWG failed to categorize targets into "universal" and "national" priorities. It also did not achieve a conclusive agreement on an agenda that was capable of development beyond financial and trade development.[55] Finally, the OWG should have proposed clear methods to assess and follow the advancements of the goals. As a result, accountability is weakened.[56]

Beyond the OWG, four other processes worked within the UN to develop the framework that succeeded the MDGs.

44 UN Department of Public Information, "Rio+20 in Numbers," *United Nations* (June 22, 2012): https://sustainabledevelopment. un.org/content/documents/7929rio20%20in%20numbers_final2.pdf

45 United Nations Sustainable Development, *Agenda 21, (*Rio de Janeiro: United Nations Conference on Environment & Development, 1992) Sustainable Development Goals Knowledge Platform. Accessed June 22, 2024. https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/ documents/Agenda21.pdf

46 John Vidal, "Rio+20: Earth Summit Dawns With Stormier Clouds Than in 1992," *The Guardian*, October 19, 2022, https://www. theguardian.com/environment/2012/jun/19/rio-20-earth-summit-1992-2012.

47 United Nations General Assembly, Resolution 66/288, The Future We Want, A/RES/66/288 (Jul. 27, 2012), https://www.un.org/en/ development/desa/population/migration/generalassembly/docs/globalcompact/A_RES_66_288.pdf

48 A/RES/66/288

49 A/RES/66/288

50 "Civil Society Leaders Outline, 'The Rio+20 We Don't Want,'" Goldman Environmental Prize, March 30, 2022, https://www. goldmanprize.org/blog/civil-society-leaders-outline-the-rio20-we-dont-want/.

51 "The future we don't want: Some thoughts after Rio+20", Rio+20 Portal Building the Peoples Summit Rio+20, accessed September 15, 2024, http://rio20.net/en/documentos/the-future-we-don%E2%80%99t-want-some-thoughts-after-rio20/

52 United Nations General Assembly, Resolution 68/970, Report of the Open Working Group of the General Assembly on Sustainable Development Goals, A/68/970 (Aug. 12, 2014), https://www.iom.int/sites/g/files/tmzbdl486/files/UN_Documents/69th_ Session/A_68_970.pdf

53 Debapriya Bhattacharya, Towfiqul Islam Khan, and Umme Salma, "A Commentary on the Final Outcome Document of the Open Working Group on SDGs," *The SAIS Review of International Affairs* 34, no. 2 (January 1, 2014): 165–77, https://doi.org/10.1353/ sais.2014.0034.

54 United Nations General Assembly, Resolution 68/970, Report of the Open Working Group of the General Assembly on Sustainable Development Goals, A/68/970 (Aug. 12, 2014), https://www.iom.int/sites/g/files/tmzbdl486/files/UN_Documents/69th_ Session/A_68_970.pdf

55 Debapriya Bhattacharya, Towfiqul Islam Khan, and Umme Salma, "A Commentary on the Final Outcome Document of the Open Working Group on SDGs," *The SAIS Review of International Affairs* 34, no. 2 (January 1, 2014): 165–77, https://doi.org/10.1353/ sais.2014.0034.

56 Debapriya Bhattacharya, Towfiqul Islam Khan, and Umme Salma, "A Commentary on the Final Outcome Document of the Open Working Group on SDGs."

This includes the High-Level Plenary Meeting and the UN Regional Commissions to name a few.[57] However, the OWG's report was the main basis for building the SDGs at the Sustainable Development Summit 2015. Following the Sustainable Development Summit held in New York City, 160 Heads of State and all 191 Member States had adopted the 17 SDGs and their 169 targets. This addressed the 10 percent of the world's population that lived in extreme poverty and the 11 percent that were malnourished. Furthermore, adopting the SDGs helps to address the five percent that have no access to primary healthcare, 36 percent who lack basic sanitation facilities, and the 15 percent who lack electricity.[58]

Although the SDGs represent a concise advancement from the MDGs, there are still extensive areas of improvement. Firstly, there needs to be more consistency in the growth of the SDGs. "The Future We Want" document recognized the necessity for a change in patterns in production and consumption.[59] Yet, the SDGs' essence relies on the traditional growth model, which states that increasing production and consumption represent a better economic state for countries. While the SDGs recommend using resources more efficiently and encouraging sustainable practices, they do not completely combat the issues mentioned in the initial outline.

Secondly, the SDGs exacerbated global inequality. They called for reducing inequality by allowing countries to borrow funds for their progress. However, the SDGs put a bigger burden on countries that have the biggest problems and the least capacity to tackle them.[60] Additionally, SDGs do not handle the issue of debt. Developing countries are spending over USD 700 billion each year just to pay off the interest on these debts.[61]

This money could otherwise be used to help reduce poverty in these countries. Thirdly, the SDGs failed to recognize the need to regulate financial markets while encouraging countries to liberalize their economies.

Additionally, tax evasion and tax avoidance drain developing countries 1.7 trillion USD each year.[62] Furthermore, the mismeasurement of poverty remains widely criticized. Many countries, such as Mexico, measure poverty multi-dimensionally. This means that they consider access to services, more considerate income, and inclusion in society for poverty ratios.[63] Nonetheless, the United Nations continues considering a daily income of USD 1.25 in poverty. However, the majority of experts are saying that USD 1.25 a day is not enough money for people to live on.[64] Lastly, a main critique of the SDGs includes accountability. The lack of accountability for the goals is attributed to three factors. First, the SDGs are non-binding, meaning there is no enforcement mechanism. Second, they need to be more funded. Third, the SDGs need to be more urgent, with a climate crisis driving food costs up and displacing millions. The fourth is that the SDGs are vague and lack specific actions.[65]

Nonetheless, the SDGs represent a global framework that promotes cooperation and looks for improvement worldwide. Each goal was expected to incorporate one of the three pillars of sustainable development. The axis represents the approach. Economic goal focuses on growth and productivity. Social goals prioritize well-being and development. Environmental refers to the responsible management of resources. However, the goals are naturally multi-functional and may be classified into different axes. These axes allow the SDGs to be classified

57   Debapriya Bhattacharya, Towfiqul Islam Khan, and Umme Salma, "A Commentary on the Final Outcome Document of the Open Working Group on SDGs."
58   Vikrant Kulkarni and Ashish Aggarwal, "A Theoretical Review of Whether Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) Complement Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) Needs," *Theoretical Economics Letters* 12, no. 02 (January 1, 2022): 575–600, https://doi.org/10.4236/tel.2022.122033.
59   United Nations General Assembly, Resolution 66/288, The Future We Want, A/RES/66/288 (Jul. 27, 2012), https://www.un.org/en/development/desa/population/migration/generalassembly/docs/globalcompact/A_RES_66_288.pdf
60   Julian Pecquet, "10 criticisms of the UN's Sustainable Development Goals," *The African Report* (September 18, 2023): https://www.theafricareport.com/322366/10-criticisms-of-the-uns-sustainable-development-goals/
61   "Five Reasons to Think Twice About the UN's Sustainable Development," Africa at LSE, June 27, 2019, https://blogs.lse.ac.uk/africaatlse/2015/09/23/five-reasons-to-think-twice-about-the-uns-sustainable-development-goals/
62   "Five Reasons to Think Twice About the UN's Sustainable Development," Africa at LSE
63   Consejo Nacional de Evaluación de Política de Desarrollo Social. *Multidimensional Measurement of poverty in Mexico: an economic wellbeing and social rights approach*. Ciudad de Mexico: CONEVAL, 2015: https://www.coneval.org.mx/informesPublicaciones/FolletosInstitucionales/Documents/Multidimensional-Measurement-of-poverty-in-Mexico.pdf
64   "Five Reasons to Think Twice About the UN's Sustainable Development," Africa at LSE,
65   Julian Pecquet, "10 criticisms of the UN's Sustainable Development Goals," *The African Report* (September 18, 2023): https://www.theafricareport.com/322366/10-criticisms-of-the-uns-sustainable-development-goals/

and better understood. The Background Guide will refer to the goals by their primary axis, which is listen below.

Division of the Sustainable Development Goals by Axis[66]

1. **No Poverty.** Primary Axis: Social, Secondary Axis: Economic.
2. **Zero Hunger.** Primary Axis: Social, Secondary Axis: Economic.
3. **Good Health and Well-Being.** Primary Axis: Social, Secondary Axis: Social.
4. **Quality Education.** Primary Axis: Social, Secondary Axis: Social.
5. **Gender Equality.** Primary Axis Social, Secondary Axis: Economic
6. **Clean Water and Sanitation.** Primary Axis: Environmental, Secondary Axis: Social.
7. **Affordable and Clean Energy.** Primary Axis: Environmental, Secondary Axis: Economic.
8. **Decent Work and Economic Growth.** Primary Axis: Economic, Secondary Axis: Social.
9. **Industry, Innovation, and Infrastructure.** Primary Axis: Economic, Secondary Axis: Social.
10. **Reduced Inequalities.** Primary Axis: Economic, Secondary Axis: Social.
11. **Sustainable Cities and Communities.** Primary Axis: Social, Secondary Axis: Environmental.
12. **Responsible Consumption and Production.** Primary Axis: Environmental, Secondary Axis: Economic.
13. **Climate Action.** Primary Axis: Environmental, Secondary Axis: Economic.
14. **Life Below Water.** Primary Axis: Environmental, Secondary Axis: Economic.
15. **Life on Land.** Primary Axis: Environmental, Secondary Axis: Environmental.
16. **Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions**. Primary Axis: Social, Secondary Axis: Economic.
17. **Partnership for the Goals.** Primary Axis: Economic, Secondary Axis: Social.

Social Inclusion Goals

Social inclusion is where all people have equal access and opportunity within society. This means helping people improve their skills and chances in life when they face difficulties because of their identity.[67] Tools such as the Gini Index and the Human Development Index (HDI) are used to analyze inequality and quality of life to measure countries' social inclusion. These measurements help the UN understand and improve people's lives.[68] The HDI is a crucial indicator because it covers three essential areas: living a long and healthy life, obtaining an education, and having a basic standard of living.[69] These areas are tied to significant social issues such as gender equality, prisoners' rights, and religious discrimination.[70] Measuring this is crucial because it helps countries work toward the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Social inclusion is vital as it helps people live with dignity and safety and have the chance to improve their lives.[71] It often leads to a significant reduction in conflict and a peaceful and secure society. Inclusive societies ensure that everyone can access essential services and participate in political, social, and cultural life.[72] The main goal of social inclusion is to provide everyone, regardless of their background, equal opportunities to engage in society.[73] Several SDGs connect to social inclusion, such as ending poverty, improving health, and achieving gender equality. For example, SDG five focuses on gender equality. This SDG will cost around USD 6.4 trillion annually from 2023 to 2030. This shows how vital social inclusion is

66   Debapriya Bhattacharya, Towfiqul Islam Khan, and Umme Salma, "A Commentary on the Final Outcome Document of the Open Working Group on SDGs," *The SAIS Review of International Affairs* 34, no. 2 (January 1, 2014): 165–77, https://doi.org/10.1353/sais.2014.0034.
67   "Social Inclusion," World Bank Group, accessed July 16, 2024, https://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/social-inclusion
68   "Gini coefficient by Country 2024," World Population Review, accessed July 16, 2024, https://worldpopulationreview.com/country-rankings/gini-coefficient-by-country
69   "Human Development Index," Human Development Reports, accessed July 16, 2024, https://hdr.undp.org/data-center/human-development-index#/indicies/HDI
70   "Thematic Factsheet | Social Inclusion," UNESCO, November 3, 2022, https://www.unesco.org/en/socialinclusion-factsheet
71   "Sustainability 101 - Why is Social Inclusion Important," Sustainability Management School of Switzerland, accessed July 16, 2024, https://sumas.ch/sustainability-101-why-is-social-inclusion-important/.
72   Patrick Baton, Louise Cord, José cuesta, Sabina A. Espinoza, Greg Larson and Michael Woolock, *Social Sustainability in Development: Meeting the Challenges if the 21st Century* (Washington: International Bank for Reconstruction and Development, 2023), https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/server/api/core/bitstreams/863ea6d3-462e-4bc7-b399-2732a2714eca/content.
73   "Social Inclusion," SDG Resource Centre, accessed July 16, 2024, https://sdgresources.relx.com/social-inclusion-0.

Poverty in the Kerman & Balochistan Province in Iran
Credit: Mostafa Meraji

to achieving the 2030 Agenda and shaping the 2045 goals.[74]

Social inclusion has been a challenging problem in recent years.[75] In 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic showed just how unequal the world is, especially when it comes to race, class, and gender. These differences were evident in the health system and crises, such as the housing crisis in the United States.[76] Conflicts and wars also worsen inequality. For example, in Sudan, the ongoing civil war has deepened the division between different ethnic, religious, and regional groups.[77] Some experts think the war started because certain groups were excluded from society. The Chief of the UN Humanitarian and Emergency Relief called the civil war in Sudan "one of the worst humanitarian nightmares in recent history."[78] Social inclusion is essential for a country's growth and should focus on helping vulnerable communities get more involved.[79] For example, In India, many people still struggle to get the resources they need, face high levels of poverty,

and deal with poor public services.[80] Despite India's laws promoting social inclusion, there are still significant challenges in properly delivering aid. This demonstrates the gap between policy creation and policy implementation.

Local, regional, and international action must be taken to ensure everyone is included. Policy development must be centered around inclusivity to address these issues. For example, Greece's government implemented the National Strategy for Social Inclusion and Poverty Reduction 2021. This was to fight social exclusion with various programs, such as prioritizing social inclusion in every policy.[81] These local programs are essential for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The United Nations Commission for Europe Task Force explained that measuring social exclusion is necessary because it ensures no one is left behind, a vital phrase of the SDGs.[82]

74 "The Costs of achieving the SDGs: Gender Equality," UN Trade & Development, accessed July 16, 2024, https://unctad.org/sdg-costing/gender-equality.
75 "Social Inclusion," World Bank Group, accessed July 16, 2024, https://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/social-inclusion
76 UN HABITAT, *WHO Housing and health guidelines* (United Kingdom: World Health Organization, 2018), https://unhabitat.org/sites/default/files/2020/05/130520_-_housing_and_covid-19_key_messages.pdf.
77 "Civil War in Sudan," Global Conflict Tracker, July 10, 2024, https://www.cfr.org/global-conflict-tracker/conflict/power-struggle-sudan.
78 Global Conflict Tracker, "Civil War in Sudan."
79 "Social Inclusion," Global Programme India, accessed July 16, 2024, https://caritasindia.org/GlobalProgramIndia/social-inclusion-2/.
80 Global Programme India, "Social Inclusion."
81 "Social Inclusion," European Commission, last updated November 23, 2023, https://national-policies.eacea.ec.europa.eu/youthwiki/chapters/greece/45-initiatives-promoting-social-inclusion-and-raising-awareness.
82 UNECE, *Approaches to Measuring Social Exclusion* (New York: United Nations Economic Commission for Europe, 2022) https://unece.org/sites/default/files/2022-05/ECECESSTAT20221.pdf.

Each of the 193 member states signed up to complete the SDGs for the 2030 Agenda agreed to participate in Voluntary National Reviews (VNR).[83] These reviews outline the progress they have made towards these goals. By 2019, at least 40 percent of these countries mentioned the importance and commitment that must exist to monitor the SDGs.[84] Wealthier countries can achieve the SDGs at a global level. For example, European countries generally have a higher Gross Domestic Product (GDP). GDP measures the monetary value of products produced in a country over time.[85] The wealth gap between countries is reflected in a higher GDP. This usually represents higher living standards, greater access to public services, and a more robust social safety net. The Gini Coefficient, which measures inequality on a scale from one to 100, tends to be around 30 to 35 points in Europe. In contrast, in many African countries, points tend to be higher than 40, indicating considerable income inequality.[86]

Social inclusion is essential in countries with a Gini Coefficient above 30, meaning high inequality exists. The International Bank for Reconstruction and Development found that social exclusion raises the cost of jobs, education, health, and politics.[87] Exclusion is common in countries with unfair laws, power imbalances, and weak democracies. For example, banning same-sex marriage or limiting women's rights often comes from a country's colonial history, high inequality, and lack of democracy. The extent of criminalization of same-sex marriage or the behavior of women reflects colonial history in places like Colombia, Brazil, Gabon, South Africa, and Singapore. However, countries such as South Africa and Singapore have recently changed laws to allow same-sex marriage, decriminalize homosexuality, and reduce job discrimination.[88] This shows the progress made toward social inclusion.

Even though many countries have made laws to fight discrimination, some still need significant improvement. In India, for example, economic inequality has caused significant problems like human trafficking, displacement due to environmental issues, and organized violence.[89] One primary reason for inequality in India is the caste system. This system divides people based on their jobs and social status, which worsened under British rule in India.[90] Despite India's Constitution now banning caste discrimination, the system is still used in certain regions.[91] The Constitution establishes fundamental rights in Article 15, Article 21A, and Article 25.[92] It establishes that discrimination due to caste results in restricting free interaction with others or taking part in important decisions about society, money, and politics. This takes away their freedom of speech, limits their chances to succeed, and makes it more difficult to obtain financial security, which only worsens inequality.[93]

Furthermore, homosexuality was made legal in India in 2018. In traditional and conservative countries like India, Iraq, and Gambia, there is often little acceptance of groups that defend the rights of minorities.[94] Even though acts such as discrimination are prohibited by law, tradition remains difficult to change. Thus, the right to freedom of expression or speech in conservative countries directly affects social inclusion.[95]

83 https://www.cepal.org/en/topics/2030-agenda-sustainable-development/about-2030-agenda-sustainable-development
84 UNECE, *Approaches to Measuring Social Exclusion.*
85 "Chapter 2: International Cooperation to Accelerate Sustainable Development in Countries and Related Domestic Policies," UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs, accessed August 11, 2024, https://www.un.org/esa/sustdev/natlinfo/indicators/indisd/english/chapt2e.htm#:~:text=GDP%20is%20a%20measure%20of,from%20International%20and%20National%20Sources
86 "Gini coefficient by Country 2024," World Population Review, accessed July 16, 2024, https://worldpopulationreview.com/country-rankings/gini-coefficient-by-country
87 Maitreyi Bordia Das and Sabina Anne Espinoza, *Inclusion Matters in Africa* (Washington: International Bank for Reconstruction and Development, 2020) https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/server/api/core/bitstreams/0fd626c6-d580-589a-95ea-eb76eccb9e14/content
88 Reality Check Team, "Homosexuality: The countries where it is illegal to be gay," *BBC News*, March 31, 2023, https://www.bbc.com/news/world-43822234
89 BBC News, "What is India's caste system?," *BBC News*, June 19, 2019, https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-india-35650616
90 https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-india-48619734
91 https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-india-35650616
92 Sukhadeo Thorat and Nidhi Sadana Sanharwal, *Caste and Social Exclusion: Issues Related to Concept, Indicators and Measurement* (Indian Institute of Dalit Studies, 2020), https://dalitstudies.org.in/media/cawb5dhg/working-paper-on-social-exclusion.pdf?download#:~:text=1.-,Caste%2Dbased%20Social%20Exclusion,(Thorat%20and%20Louis%202003).
93 Thorat and Sanharwal, *Caste and Social Exclusion: Issues Related to Concept, Indicators and Measurement.*
94 Amnesty International, "LGBTI Rights," Amnesty International, accessed July 16, 2024, https://www.amnesty.org/en/what-we-do/discrimination/lgbti-rights/
95 *The Constitution of India,* art. 15. https://cdnbbsr.s3waas.gov.in/s380537a945c7aaa788ccfcdf1b99b5d8f/

Moreover, unemployment, illness, and lack of education contribute to cycles of poverty.[96] Due to gender, racial, and socioeconomic inequality, access to education, especially for women, is severely limited.[97] Women make up more than 54 percent of the uneducated population worldwide and continue to have the lowest rate of access to education.[98] In Sub-Saharan Africa, at least 34 million girls may never receive an education. This demonstrates the connection between poverty and inequality. Unfortunately, ongoing global crises, such as COVID-19, have also slowed progress in developing countries.

Additionally, a 2024 report by the World Bank states that the Sub-Saharan African population is expected to double by 2050, increasing the difficulty of ending poverty.[99] Despite countries' promises, discrimination, segregation, and abuses of human rights have worsened in the last five years. While many developing countries have made progress in reducing inequalities in education and healthcare, more improvement is still needed.[100] The lack of resources and strict policies to end discrimination have also worsened segregation.

Unless urgent and effective action is taken to reverse rising inequality, the development of sustainable systems will remain at risk of becoming irreversible. For this reason, the Member States of the High-Level Political Forum (HLPF) must prioritize combating these inequalities strategically. Members must consider these countries' different situations while recognizing these shortcomings and remaining grounded in the UN's principles. Inequalities fuel wars and increase the negative impacts of crises such as pandemics and natural disasters. Member States of the High-Level Political Forum (HLPF) must prioritize fighting these inequalities. Countries need to consider the different situations each country may be facing and develop a plan to address these through the United Nations.[101]

Economic Growth Goals

An economic system shows how a society and its government organize and share resources, services, and goods within a country.[102] Governments and businesses play critical roles in shaping the economy but operate differently. The public sector, which includes the government, provides essential services to the people. The private sector, which is made up of businesses, is driven by competition and operates without direct control from the government.[103] Economic systems can sometimes fail due to major events such as wars, revolutions, famines, or severe inflation.[104] A financial system comprises institutions like banks, insurance companies, and stock markets. These institutions help move money and provide financial services. Financial systems work at local, regional, and global levels.[105] Technology has improved financial systems worldwide, leading to greater financial inclusion. Financial inclusion states that more people can access practical and affordable financial products and services.[106] This helps citizens manage daily life, plans for the future, and emergencies. A digital financial account is an online account where people can store and manage their money instead of using a traditional bank account.[107] By 2021, 76 percent of adults had a digital financial

uploads/2024/07/20240716890312078.pdf
96   "Right to Education: Situation around the world," Humanium, accessed July 16, 2024, https://www.humanium.org/en/right-to-education/
97   Humanium, "Right to Education: Situation around the world."
98   "Girl's Education," UNICEF, accessed July 16, 2024, https://www.unicef.org/education/girls-education
99   Uraidah Hassani, "A critical moment to rpioritize girl's secondary education in Sub-Saharan Africa," World Bank Blogs, last modified April 19, 2024, https://blogs.worldbank.org/en/nasikiliza/critical-moment-to-prioritize-girls-secondary-education-in-sub-saharan-africa-afe-0424#:~:text=More%20girls%20are%20in%20school,early%20pregnancy%2C%20and%20domestic%20responsibilities.
100   "Right to Education: Situation around the world," Humanium, accessed July 16, 2024, https://www.humanium.org/en/right-to-education/
101   United Nations System, Chief Executives Board for Coordination, *Leaving No One Behind: Equality and Non-discrimination at the Heart of Sustainable Development* (New York: United Nations, 2017), https://unsceb.org/sites/default/files/imported_files/CEB%20 equality%20framework-A4-web-rev3.pdf
102   "Economic System," CFI, accessed July 16, 2024, https://corporatefinanceinstitute.com/resources/economics/economic-system/
103   "Public vs. Private Sector: Key Differences," RCADEMY: World of Life, accessed July 16, 2024, https://rcademy.com/difference-between-public-and-private-sector/
104   "What is an economic recession?" Santander, accessed July 16, 2024, https://www.santander.com/en/stories/economic-recession
105   "Financial System: Definition, Types, and Market Components," Investopedia, accessed July 16, 2024, https://www.investopedia.com/terms/f/financial-system.asp
106   "Financial Inclusion," World Bank Group, accessed July 16, 2024, https://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/financialinclusion/overview#:~:text=Great%20strides%20have%20been%20made,adult%20population%20had%20an%20account.
107   Dealhub Experts, "Digital Finance," Dealhub, published may 16, 2024, https://dealhub.io/glossary/digital-finance/

account.[108] These accounts are vital for including more people in economic activities and can help reduce income inequality.

In countries like China, Kenya, India, and Thailand, 80 percent of their population has financial accounts. These countries achieved this by relying on reforms, innovation in the private sector, and opening low-cost accounts. At the 2015 World Bank-IMF Spring Meetings, the World Bank Group proposed and implemented measurable commitments to achieve Universal Finance Access by 2020 (UFA2020). This initiative focused on twenty-five countries where 73 percent of all financially excluded people live, like Mozambique, Zambia, Côte d'Ivoire, and Peru.[109] The World Bank Group's work was not limited to these countries. Instead, based on estimates identified in the UFA2020 framework, countries worldwide would have several opportunities. Some of these were offering access to 1.3 billion adults by opening the market to reach financially active adults who save, remit, or pay bills in cash.[110] Due to this framework and others, such as the Financial Inclusion Global Initiative (FIGI), countries have achieved the most progress toward Financial Inclusion through technological innovations.

Digital technologies can greatly expand access to financial services. In 2016, the G20 Global Partnership for Financial Inclusion (GPFI) created eight key principles to help governments promote digital financial inclusion.[111] A study on the role of financial inclusion in meeting finance-related Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) found important links between SDGs, economic growth, and financial inclusion.[112] For example, SDG 1 aims to end poverty and

shows that financial inclusion can reduce poverty, especially in developing countries.[113] This is closely tied to SDG 8, which focuses on economic growth. Financial inclusion has boosted economic growth, not necessarily economic development, in 152 countries. However, the impact may also be less positive in some areas. Even though banks have made it easier to receive loans, economic growth still depends on which financial services are provided and how countries use their financial resources.[114]

The partnership between the public and private sector (PPP) effectively improves the infrastructure for financial services. Over the last two decades, these partnerships have helped renew and maintain infrastructure in the public sector in many aspects. This includes social services, public utilities, communications, and government offices.[115] The global debate on the impact of PPP procedures is common. Many policymakers and experts offer several models based on the economic profiles of each country. Countries like Czechia, Hungary, and Poland have embarked on PPPs due to their need for sustainable investment of infrastructure on a large scale. According to information published by the World Bank, Czechia's economy has slowed, and inflation has risen due to Russia's war against Ukraine since 2014. The economy has slowed due to rising costs and a weakening domestic demand. This means the amount spent on services within a country has decreased.[116] The economic standpoint in Czechia fell short and struggled due to inflation. Inflation is the increase in prices over a given period, which negatively impacts a customer's financial decisions.[117] Factors such as corruption

108   "Financial Inclusion," World Bank Group, accessed July 16, 2024, https://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/financialinclusion/overview#:~:text=Great%20strides%20have%20been%20made,adult%20population%20had%20an%20account.
109   "Universal Financial Access 2020," World Bank Group, accessed July 16, 2024, https://ufa.worldbank.org/en/country-progress
110   World Bank Group, "Universal Financial Access 2020."
111   "New G20 High-Level Principles for Digital Financial Inclusion," GPFI, accessed July 17, 2024,https://www.gpfi.org/news/new-g20-high-level-principles-digital-financial-inclusion
112   Shen, Yap, Hui Shan Lee, and Ping Xin Liew, "The Role of Financial Inclusion in Achieving Finance-Related Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs): A Cross-Country Analysis," *Economic Research-Ekonomska Istraživanja* 36, no. 3 (June 2023): https://hrcak.srce.hr/file/455043.
113   Francesa Regalado, "World Bank sees 4.6% growth in developing Asia in 2024," *Nikkei Asia,* April 1, 2024, https://asia.nikkei.com/Economy/World-Bank-sees-4.6-growth-in-developing-Asia-in-2024#:~:text=Developing%20Asia%20includes%20China%2C%20Mongolia,Association%20of%20Southeast%20Asian%20Nations.
114   Regalado, "World Bank sees 4.6% growth in developing Asia in 2024."
115   Sarah Foster, "What is inflation? Here's how rising prices can erode your purchasing power," Bankrate, last modified July 11, 2024, https://www.bankrate.com/banking/federal-reserve/what-is-inflation/#:~:text=Inflation%20is%20a%20sustained%20increase,tough%20financial%20decisions%20for%20consumers.
116   OECD, *OECD Economic Surveys: Czech Republic 2023,* (Paris: OECD Publishing, 2023) https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/docserver/e392e937-en.pdf?expires=1721332774&id=id&accname=guest&checksum=E2E136C10102F42BC03D9E9AE08CAE58.
117   Sarah Foster, "What is inflation? Here's how rising prices can erode your purchasing power," Bankrate, last modified July 11, 2024, https://www.bankrate.com/banking/federal-reserve/what-is-inflation/#:~:text=Inflation%20is%20a%20sustained%20increase,tough%20

also negatively affect economic growth and development.

The impact of corruption on economic growth in developing countries is undeniable. Corruption is a global problem that manifests in different ways throughout the world. It is defined as the abuse of entrusted power for private gain. It erodes trust, weakens democracy, and exacerbates inequality, social division, poverty, and environmental crises.[118] The Corruption Perception Index (CPI) paints a troubling picture of the current dysfunctional situation in Eastern Europe and Central Asia. The 2023 Corruption Perception Index (CPI) shows that most Eastern Europe and Central Asia countries are not progressing against corruption. These countries include Georgia, Armenia, and Montenegro and have significantly improved their CPI scores over the last ten years.[119] Across the region, governments control the judiciary and law enforcement institutions to supposedly maintain impunity for corruption for those in privileged circles.[120] For example, Putin's long-term regime to dominate Russia, which currently has a 26 out of 100 in their Corruption Perception Index (CPI). Multiple forms of corruption affect Russia's political economy despite the insincere efforts to fight it. Corruption has been a force to control the political elite and civilians in the country. Since the year 2017, corruption in Russia has increased economic inefficiencies and has distorted the purpose of the political system.[121] Hiding assets in relatives' names and sending wealth offshore are ways the government has hidden ill-gotten gains.[122] The result of such actions is that the ruling elite can follow ambitions without legal or economic restraint, leading to unchecked power in the country.

However, small improvements have been made. With a Corruption Perception Index (CPI) of 42, Moldova continues to advance in its score and economic growth. The Moldova Financial Sector Transparency Activity (FSTA) has taken actions to improve transparency within the country's financial sector. It has helped strengthen the capacity of the National Bank of Moldova (NBM), the Moldova Central Securities Depository (CSD), and the Moldova National Commission for Financial Markets (NCFM) to combat financial crimes and fight money laundering, something common in the country.[123] This was done with the assistance of the USAID program, created in 1961 to lead the United States government's international development and humanitarian efforts.[124] USAID works with over 100 countries to assess five main goals: promote global health, support global stability, provide humanitarian assistance, catalyze innovation, and empower women. This is why USAID Moldova's Future Technologies Activity (FTA) has indirectly helped the country to enhance competitiveness and endorse market integration. The Future Technologies Activity (FTA) helps countries transition towards circular and sustainable business models and the application of green practices and technologies to build a resilient economy.[125]

Building green and sustainable practices is also essential to a resilient economy. This is why Green Growth (GGR) has helped expand economic development and financial growth while ensuring the existence of environmental services, activities, and natural resources for human well-being.[126] This has been done thanks to projects like NetZero+. This project provides insights for governments that seek to drive a rapid and resilient transition to NetZero+ while building resilience to the impact climate change has had.[127] Green Growth (GGR)

financial%20decisions%20for%20consumers.
118   "What is Corruption?," Transparency International, accessed July 19, 2024, https://www.transparency.org/en/what-is-corruption#:~:text=Corruption%20can%20take%20many%20forms,officials%20to%20get%20lucrative%20deals.
119   Transparency International, "What is Corruption?"
120   "CPI 2023 for Eastern Europe & Central Asia: Autocracy & Weak Justice Systems enabling widespread corruption," Transparency International, last modified January 30, 2024, https://www.transparency.org/en/news/cpi-2023-eastern-europe-central-asia-autocracy-weak-justice-systems-widespread-enabling-corruption
121   Noah Buckley, *Corruption and Power in Russia* (Carnegie Corporation: Foreign Policy Research Institute, 2018) https://www.fpri.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/Buckley.pdf
122   Buckley, *Corruption and Power in Russia.*
123   "Sustainable Growth Rooted in Euro-Atlantic Integration," USAID, accessed July 18, 2024, https://www.usaid.gov/moldova/economic-growth
124   "Assistance to Foreign Countries," USAID, accessed July 18, 2024, https://www.usaid.gov/about-us#:~:text=USAID%20leads%20international%20development%20and,help%20people%20progress%20beyond%20assistance.
125   "Sustainable Growth Rooted in Euro-Atlantic Integration," USAID, accessed July 18, 2024, https://www.usaid.gov/moldova/economic-growth
126   "Net Zero+: Climate and Economic Resilience in a Changing World," OECD, accessed July 18, 2024, https://www.oecd.org/en/about/programmes/net-zero-climate-and-economic-resilience-in-a-changing-world.html
127   OECD, "Net Zero+: Climate and Economic Resilience in a Changing World."

and its practices are essential for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). GGR also promotes economic development and growth while preserving natural resources.

To achieve the implementation of GRR, it is essential to improve innovation within any country's practices, especially when debating climate change. Green technologies can help to minimize greenhouse gas emissions for environmental protection. In addition, good governance has a massive influence on sustainable growth policies and regulations.[128] Based on the mandate of the Kyoto Protocol, which seeks to limit and reduce greenhouse gas emissions by individual targets, the impact of CO2 emissions in countries such as Sri Lanka, Pakistan, and Bangladesh confirms the dependence between climate change and the economy of these countries. Change in the economic growth in a country implies changes across places, sectors, issues, and scales within the public and private sectors, like the implementation of Green technologies. However, consequences like climate change, armed conflicts, and public scrutiny have increased the relevance of environmental and social issues for the worldwide economy.[129]

The interplay between economic systems and financial inclusion plays an important role in economic growth and its correlation to shaping Sustainable Development. While corruption remains a significant barrier to progress, initiatives that consider improving governance, transparency, and collaboration between the public and private sectors are essential to enhancing financial services. Achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) requires a multifaceted approach that fosters inclusive and resilient economies.

Environmental Protection Goals

Sustainability is achieved through efficiently and effectively managing resources to preserve future generations' ability to do the same. The United Nations is targeted to achieve 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by 2030. These included gender equality, equal access to education, the management of clean water and sanitation, and building a sustainable ecosystem on land.[130] Given that natural resources and a healthy environment are fundamental to the SDGs, improvements to these resources are vital.[131] The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) recognize the importance of the environment in SDG six: Clean Water and Sanitation, SDG seven: Affordable and Clean Energy, SDG 12: Responsible Consumption and Production, SDG 13: Climate Action, SDG 14: Life Below Water, and SDG 15: Life on Land. Efforts to implement cost-effective and environmentally friendly technology or improve legislation addressing environmental issues are insufficient. Renewable power generation capacity is the capacity of power plants and other installations that use renewable energy sources to produce electricity.[132] In 2022, the costs of production and installation were falling while policy-making, support, and incentives were increasing.[133] Burning fossil fuels has generated about 80 percent of our energy needs for over a century. Using fossil fuels for energy has taken an enormous toll on humanity and the environment. Oil, coal, and natural gas are all types of fossil fuels and have had an immeasurable impact on the environment. As a result of these, land degradation, destruction of wildlife habitat, water pollution, air pollutants, and ocean acidification have impacted communities worldwide.[134]

Many countries have transitioned to renewable energy to

128 Zhang Yikun, Lin Woon Leong, Phan The Cong, Ayman Abu-Rumman, Ata Al Shraah, and Sanil S Hishan. 2022. "Green Growth, Governance, and Green Technology Innovation. How Effective towards SDGs in G7 Countries?" *Economic Research-Ekonomska Istraživanja* 36, no. 2 (November 2022) 6-12, https://doi.org/10.1080/1331677X.2022.2145984

129 "G20 High Level Principles for Digital Financial Inclusion," Global Partnership for Financial Inclusion, accessed July 18, 2024, https://www.gpfi.org/sites/gpfi/files/G20-HLP-Summary.pdf

130 Chandra Mohan, Jenifer Robinson, Lata Vodwal and Neeraj Kumari, "Chapter 16 - Sustainable Development Goals for addressing environmental challenges," *Green Chemistry Approaches to Environmental Sustainability* 330, no. 1171155 (March 2023): 357-374, https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/B9780443189593000070

131 Caichun Yin, et al. "Ecosystem carbon sequestration service supports the Sustainable Development Goals progress," *Journal of Environmental Management* 330, 117155 (March 2023): https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0301479722027281

132 Julian Prime, et al., *Renewable Capacity Statistics 2024,* (Abu Dhabi: International Renewable Energy Agency, 2024) https://www.irena.org/Publications/2024/Mar/Renewable-capacity-statistics-2024#:~:text=Renewable%20power%20generation%20capacity%20is,end%20of%20the%20calendar%20year.

133 Prime, Abdulkadir Ahmed, Akande, Elhassan, Escamilla and Whiteman, *Renewable Capacity Statistics 2024.*

134 Melissa Denchak, "Fossil Fuels: The Dirty Facts," NRDC, last modified June 1, 2022, https://www.nrdc.org/stories/fossil-fuels-dirty-facts#sec-future

drive climate change efforts. In August of 2022, Estonia adopted this target and aimed for it to be achieved by 2030 after surpassing their previous target of 40 percent in 2022.[135] Although not all countries expect to implement renewable energy to generate electricity by 2030, several have changed their policies. Norway leads the Renewable Energy category, with almost 100 percent of its electricity coming from hydropower and wind energy. However, ambitious renewable targets and policies improve countries' climate action. They alone cannot minimize greenhouse gas emissions (GHG). The climate of the Central African Republic (CAR) is one of the most poorly monitored in the world.[136] This is because many meteorological stations owned by the government were closed. The repercussions of climate change and armed conflict manifest in different ways. Instability and increasing scarcity of resources in regions like the Sahel or Lake Chad have negatively impacted zones dependent on agriculture, fishing, and cattle. This has displaced populations and resulted in seasonal migration across borders. The existence of armed

violence in 2013 caused security conditions to worsen in the country, which furthered chaos across the Central African Republic (CAR).[137] Natural weather events, such as extreme floods, fuel displacement and migration in the country. The Central African Republic's conditions make its citizens particularly vulnerable to climate shocks amidst ongoing conflict.[138] According to data provided by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), increased incidences of rainfall have also led to soil erosion and waterlogging of crops, increasing food insecurity in the country.[139]

Due to these conditions, the Central African Republic (CAR) government considered taking action regarding climate change. CAR expects to reduce its emissions by five percent in the 2030 and 2050 horizons to increase its potential.[140] The Central African Republic (CAR) has also aspired to reduce emissions of short-lived climate pollutants (SLCP), which are critical participants in short-term global warming, having harmful effects on health, agriculture, and surrounding

135 Jan Burck, et al., *Results: Monitoring Climate Mitigation Efforts of 63 Countries plus the EU - Covering more than 90% of the Global Greenhouse Gas Emissions,* (Bonn, Germany: Climate Action Network International), https://ccpi.org/wp-content/uploads/CCPI-2024-Results.pdf
136 International Committee of the Red Cross, "Climate Change in the Central African Republic: What threats?," *International Committee of the Red Cross,* February 2, 2021, https://www.icrc.org/en/document/climate-change-central-african-republic-what-threats
137 Archibald Henry, "How Climate Change Fuels Instability in Central Africa," *The United States Institute of Peace*, September 22, 2022, https://www.usip.org/publications/2022/09/how-climate-change-fuels-instability-central-africa
138 Henry, "How Climate Change Fuels Instability in Central Africa."
139 "Central African Republic," UNEP: Interactive Country Fiches, accessed July 18, 2024, https://dicf.unepgrid.ch/central-african-republic/climate-change
140 "NDC Registry," United Nations Climate Change, accessed July 18, 2024, https://unfccc.int/NDCREG

Pollution of the Magdalena River
Credit: Cesar Rincon

ecosystems.[141] Additionally, the country has remained committed to the Green Climate Fund. Nonetheless, limited funding in The Central African Republic has hindered long-term sustainable solutions in the country. The financing for these projects is estimated at USD 2.248 billion. However, the Central African Republic can only contribute 10 percent, USD 200 million.[142]

The ocean is also impacted by human-made global warming. The ocean has absorbed about 90 percent of the heat generated by rising emissions, which warms the ocean. Due to increased carbon emissions, the sea level has risen, marine heatwaves have increased, and ocean acidification is worsening.[143] These sudden changes have caused a lasting impact on marine biodiversity, especially in The Great Barrier Reef.[144] The Great Barrier Reef is one of the planet's richest and most complex natural ecosystems, but climate change has taken a toll on the future that awaits its coral reefs. The average global sea surface temperature (SSF) for February 2024 was 21.06°C, the highest for any month in the dataset.[145] Marine species are forced to move to colder habitats as water temperature rises. This migration creates competition for food and shelter, which threatens the entire ecosystem.[146] Severe weather events, such as floods, have also caused significant damage to coral reefs. However, the Great Barrier Reef Foundation has implemented nine projects to face these threats. Reef restoration, growing heat-tolerant corals, protecting vulnerable species, and community-led conservation have helped build resilience in climate change. Project partners include the Dawul Wuru Aboriginal Corporation, the Dreamtime Dive, and Snorkel. They helped bring together cultural knowledge and scientific monitoring to guide future on-ground actions to care for three reefs in the Yirrganydji Sea County.[147]

Environmental education is extremely important, especially as the Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) fosters a sustainable world. Education has a significant part in raising living standards all over the world, and it has contributed significantly to development globally.[148] It is important to recognize the balance between humanity and nature and maintain it.[149] This has also helped develop fields such as ecology and Social Ecology. Social Ecology seeks to show a reconstructive and transformative outlook on social and environmental issues, promoting democracy and a world that reharmonizes humans with the natural world.[150] Without environmental education, activism, and outdoor learning programs for students, parents, and teachers, the future would not be prepared to address the difficulties the world currently faces.[151] Effectively combating climate change involves a worldwide effort and activism.

As it is known, the consistent increase of industrialized sectors has put immense pressure on natural resources.[152] The total global extraction of materials from the Earth has tripled in the last 50 years, and it is still expected to grow by 60 percent in the next 25 years.[153] The United Nations currently projects

141 United Nations Climate Change, "NDC Registry."
142 "Central African Republic," UNEP: Interactive Country Fiches, accessed July 18, 2024, https://dicf.unepgrid.ch/central-african-republic/climate-change
143 "How is the Climate Change impacting the World's Ocean," United Nations: Climate Action, accessed July 18, 2024, https://www.un.org/en/climatechange/science/climate-issues/ocean-impacts
144 "Climate Change," Great Barrier Reef Foundation, accessed July 18, 2024, https://www.barrierreef.org/the-reef/threats/climate-change
145 "Copernicus: February 2024 was globally the warmest on record – Global Sea Surface Temperatures at record high," Copernicus, accessed August 11, 2024, https://climate.copernicus.eu/copernicus-february-2024-was-globally-warmest-record-global-sea-surface-temperatures-record-high#:~:text=The%20average%20global%20sea%20surface,S%20to%2060%C2%B0N.
146 Great Barrier Reef Foundation, "Climate Change."
147 Dawul Wuru Aboriginal Corporation, *Yirrganydji Kulpul-Wu Mamingal: "Looking after Yirrganydji Sea Country,"* (Queensland Government: Dawul Wuru Aboriginal Corporation, 2014) https://dawulwuru.com.au/files/4314/0360/2666/Yirrganydji_Plan_Online.pdf
148 Kiyosov Sherzod Uralovich, et al., *A primary factor in sustainable development and environmental sustainability is environmental education* (University of Guilan, 2023), https://cjes.guilan.ac.ir/article_7155_5eeeb5cb4bfcf1422b5f3ba1ca36ad40.pdf
149 Sherzod Uralovich, Toshmamatovich, Kubayevich, Sapaev, Saylaubaevna, Beknazarova and Khurramov, *A primary factor in sustainable development and environmental sustainability is environmental education.*
150 "What is Social Ecology," Institute for Social Ecology, accessed July 19, 2024, https://social-ecology.org/wp/about/what-is-social-ecology/
151 Sherzod Uralovich, Toshmamatovich, Kubayevich, Sapaev, Saylaubaevna, Beknazarova and Khurramov, *A primary factor in sustainable development and environmental sustainability is environmental education.*
152 Muhammad Sadiq, et al. "The Role of Environmental Social and Governance in Achieving Sustainable Development Goals: Evidence from ASEAN Countries." *Economic Research-Ekonomska Istraživanja* 36, no. 1 (May 2022): 170–90. https://doi.org/10.1080/1331677X.2022.2072357
153 "Resources & Consumption," Population Matters, accessed July 18, 2024, https://populationmatters.org/the-facts-resources-consumption/

that the world will need 70 percent more food by 2050. Increasing agricultural production is especially necessary as habitat loss and exploitation become more prevalent. The global food system is the primary actor in biodiversity loss. Agriculture is an identified threat to 86 percent of species at risk of extinction.[154] This same system has been a victim of the 'cheaper food paradigm,' which is to produce more food at lower costs using fertilizers, pesticides, energy, land, and water. This paradigm has led to a cycle: the lower cost of production creates a bigger demand for food.[155] Due to their relative isolation, islands become the home of a wide variety of species and habitats, becoming biodiversity hotspots. However, these limited habitats make islands vulnerable to human destruction.[156] In Madagascar, deforestation, mining, and climate change have been causing habitat loss and threatening native species, including lemurs, fossa, and tenrec. Additionally, Madagascar has already lost 80 percent of its natural areas annually to deforestation from illegal logging of precious woods, production of charcoal, and organized anti-government arsonists.[157] Madagascar has struggled with feeding the growing, starving population due to local conflicts, poverty, and political crises.[158]

Additionally, household combustion devices, motor devices, and industrial facilities are common sources of air pollution. Pollutants of major public health concerns include ozone, nitrogen dioxide, methane, and sulfur dioxide.[159] Air quality is linked to the earth's climate and ecosystems. Many actors of air pollution are also sources of greenhouse gas emissions (GHG). Clean air has a positive impact on almost all Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), but especially SDG three: Good Health and Well-being, and SDG seven: Affordable and Clean

Energy.[160] According to the World Health Organization, 99 percent of the global population breathes unclean air. Sadly, a 2021 report from the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) found that air quality monitoring is not a legal requirement in 37 percent of countries.

Nonetheless, Air quality monitors are outfitted with sensors to detect specific pollutants. The greater the density of pollutants in the air, the higher the Air Quality Index (AQI), a measure that runs from zero to 500. An AQI below 50 is considered safe, while a measure above 100 is considered unhealthy.[161] Air quality in Turkey is a big concern, especially considering the impact these pollutants have on health—exposure to these mixtures in childhood results in decreased cognitive functioning and abstract reasoning. Lead exposure, commonly seen in Turkey, also affects verbal memory and fluency. This is why, in October 2014, five Turkish Medical Organizations stated their concerns about coal power plants and their impact on the population's health. They called upon the Turkish government not to endorse building more plants, but their thoughts were not heard.[162]

As a result, the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) launched an online strategy for rapid, large-scale, and coordinated action against air, land, and water pollution.[163] However, due to various conflicts, the impacts on developing countries have not been as successful as initially projected. One of the key initiatives from the UNEP was the Global Framework on Chemicals, adopted in 2023, and the International Conference on Chemicals Management. This framework seeks to tackle the ongoing challenges regarding the current environmental crisis. Mobilizing financial resources within countries and with international collaboration will

154   UN Enviroment Programme, "Our Global Food System if the primary driver of biodiversity loss," news release, February 3, 2021, https://www.unep.org/news-and-stories/press-release/our-global-food-system-primary-driver-biodiversity-loss
155   UN Enviroment Programme, "Our Global Food System if the primary driver of biodiversity loss," news release, February 3, 2021, https://www.unep.org/news-and-stories/press-release/our-global-food-system-primary-driver-biodiversity-loss
156   "Where is most biodiversity loss happening and why?" The Royal Society, accessed July 18, 2024, https://royalsociety.org/news-resources/projects/biodiversity/where-is-most-biodiversity-loss-happening-and-why/
157   Amanda Suzzi-Simmons, *Status of Deforestation of Madagascar*, Global Ecology and Conservation 42 (April): e02389. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.gecco.2023.e02389.
158   Suzzi Simmons, *Status of Deforestation of Madagascar.*
159   "Air Pollution," World Health Organization, accessed July 19, 2024, https://www.who.int/health-topics/air-pollution#tab=tab_1
160   "Sustainable Development Goals and Air Pollution," Clean Air Fund, accessed July 19, 2024, https://www.cleanairfund.org/news-item/sustainable-development-goals/
161   "How is Air Quality Measured?" UN Enviroment Programme, accessed July 19, 2024, https://www.unep.org/news-and-stories/story/how-air-quality-measured#:~:text=The%20greater%20the%20density%20of,above%20100%20are%20deemed%20unhealthy.
162   Health and Environment Alliance, *Air Pollution and Health in Turkey,* (HEAL: Turkish Medical Associations, 2015), https://env-health.org/IMG/pdf/150220_factsheet_air_and_health_turkey_en_final.pdf
163   "Pollution," UN Enviroment Programme, accessed July 19, 2024, https://www.unepfi.org/pollution-and-circular-economy/pollution/

Ukrainian soldiers conduct urban operations
Credit: Staff Sgt. David Carnahan

require a robust and harmonized enabling environment for financial actors worldwide.[164]

Current Status

Case Study: SDGs in Conflict Zones

A conflict zone refers to war or political instability that disrupts essential services, including housing, transportation, communication, sanitation, water, healthcare, and education. This requires the response of people outside of the affected place and community.[165] The nature of armed conflicts has changed dramatically. Wars are fought between and within countries.[166] Implementing the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) presents unique challenges and opportunities. The interconnected nature of the SDGs is undeniable when debating war and conflict in certain regions of the world. Amongst these issues, violence and conflict (SDG 16)

help poverty progress (SDG one). It also limits economic development (SDG eight), restricts actions that should be taken regarding climate change (SDG 13), and prevents affected cities and communities from becoming sustainable (SDG 11).[167]

Balochistan, one of Pakistan's provinces, has been facing different forms of conflict that have led to issues related to socio-economic development.[168] Internal conflicts challenge the development strategies in conflict zones. Nevertheless, there are means to lead change in conflict zones.[169] Economists Paul Collier and Anke Hoeffler state that the 'Greed Theory of Conflict' explains that when development increases, violence also does. After conflict emerges, challenges are bound to surface, which is currently occurring in Balochistan. The security of Pakistan has deteriorated during the last decade due to the existence of a high threat of sectarian violence and terrorist groups.[170] As a result, the Baloch people are unwilling to accept projects that attempt to address issues because they

164   UN Enviroment Programme, "Pollution."
165   AN Prasad, PL Prasad, "Children in Conflict Zones," *Medical Journal Armed Forces India* 65, no. 2 (2009): 166-169, https://www. ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4921424/#:~:text=Conflict%20zone%20refers%20to%20war,the%20community%20affected%20 %5B1%5D.
166   AN Prasad, "Children in Conflict Zones," 166-169.
167   "Sustainability in Conflict Zones," University of Waterloo, accessed August 2, 2024, https://uwaterloo.ca/environment/research/ sustainability-conflict-zones
168   Muhammad Shakeel Khan, "Development in a Conflict Zone: The Case of Balochistan," *Journal of Contemporary Studies* 8, no. 2 (2019): 38-47, https://jcs.ndu.edu.pk/site/article/view/38/19
169   Muhammad Shakeel Khan, "Development in a Conflict Zone: The Case of Balochistan," *Journal of Contemporary Studies* 8, no. 2 (2019): 38-47, https://jcs.ndu.edu.pk/site/article/view/38/19
170   "Pakistan," GOV UK, accessed August 2, 2024, https://www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice/pakistan/safety-and-security

are seen as a threat to social and cultural life in the region.

Further, the influx of workers from other provinces will alter their current conditions.[171] According to the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), Balochistan is plagued by weak institutions, weak governance, and poor law enforcement.[172] In addition, Balochistan is marred by an unsettled security situation, difficult access, uncertain water supply, and limited livelihood opportunities. Therefore, the UNDP decided to help Balochistan. This was done by enhancing local governments' ability to effectively plan and deliver services to achieve the SDGs, as well as stimulating the local economy through skills training, business, and trade.[173]

However, Balochistan is not the only province affected by armed conflict. The implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in South Sudan has been profoundly affected by the ongoing civil war that began in 2013. Despite repeated attempts at peace agreements and ceasefires in 2015 and 2017, political violence has persisted between governmental forces and their opposition in South Sudan.[174] In reaction to the overwhelming violence against civilians, the UN peacekeeping mission in this country helped establish camps to protect civilians from the unstoppable violence. Still, this mission, known as UNMISS, began to scale back in 2020, trying to dampen violence within the country.[175] The civil war has resulted in severe humanitarian challenges that directly impact SDG 1: No poverty, SDG 2: Zero Hunger, and SDG 3: Good Health and Well-Being. Despite this being the current reality in South Sudan, the country submitted its first Voluntary National Review (VNR) report on Sustainable Development

at the United Nations High-Level Political Forum on July 16th, 2024. This VNR assessed the progress the country has made by implementing its 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.[176] It focused on some progress made based on the findings of the VNR Report. This positive action helped South Sudan narrow down the focus areas that highlight SDG 13: Climate Action and SDG 16: Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions.[177]

Historically, implementing Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in conflict zones has been difficult. Due to the interconnected nature of the critical role of peace and the need for reliable data, innovation through external sources is often needed.[178] Throughout conflicts, children remain exposed to the dangers of climate change, poverty, and violence. Thousands of children die yearly as a direct result of armed violence. However, millions are victims of the indirect consequences of warfare, such as epidemics, lack of access to medical facilities, and corrosion in food security. The combined impact of these factors is deadly. In Sudan, during the food shortage in 1998, individuals with unhealthy weight-to-height ratios were identified as having low chances of survival.[179] The United Nations has undertaken several initiatives to support development in conflict zones, but few have impacted the situation they seek to assist. In 2021, The United Nations and its humanitarian partners launched the Venezuela Humanitarian Response Plan to assist 4.5 million vulnerable people. However, its implementation struggled due to funding, operational challenges, and the inadequate integration of local needs.[180]

171 Muhammad Shakeel Khan, "Development in a Conflict Zone: The Case of Balochistan," *Journal of Contemporary Studies* 8, no. 2 (2019): 38-47, https://jcs.ndu.edu.pk/site/article/view/38/19
172 Muhammad Shakeel Khan, "Development in a Conflict Zone: The Case of Balochistan," *Journal of Contemporary Studies* 8, no. 2 (2019): 38-47, https://jcs.ndu.edu.pk/site/article/view/38/19
173 "Balochistan SDGs (BSDG) Accelerated Delivery," United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), accessed August 2, 2024, https://www.undp.org/pakistan/projects/balochistan-sdgs-bsdg-accelerated-delivery
174 "Instability in South Sudan," Global Conflict Tracker, Jule 11, 2024, https://www.cfr.org/global-conflict-tracker/conflict/civil-war-south-sudan
175 Global Conflict Tracker, "Instability in South Sudan."
176 Radio Tamazuj, "South Sudan reports progress on SDGs," news release, July 17, 2023, https://www.radiotamazuj.org/en/news/article/south-sudan-reports-progress-on-sdgs#:~:text=South%20Sudan%20presented%20its%20first,2030%20Agenda%20for%20Sustainable%20Development.
177 "Young Country at high risk of becoming a failed state," Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development, accessed August 2, 2024, https://www.bmz.de/en/countries/south-sudan
178 AN Prasad, PL Prasad, "Children in Conflict Zones," *Medical Journal Armed Forces India* 65, no. 2 (2009): 166-169, https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4921424/#:~:text=Conflict%20zone%20refers%20to%20war,the%20community%20affected%20%5B1%5D
179 Prasad, "Children in Conflict Zones," 166-169.
180 UN Office for the coordination of HUmanitarian Affairs, "United Nations Launches the 2021 Venezuela Humanitarian Response Plan to assist 4.5 million people," *Relief Web*, June 17, 2021, https://reliefweb.int/report/venezuela-bolivarian-republic/united-nations-

Funding is one of the most significant barriers to the success of Humanitarian Response Plans (HRP). Reports indicated that Humanitarian Response Plans (HRP) tend to be partially funded, with coverage often being inadequate.[181] For example, the health sector in Venezuela received only 11.8 percent of the funding it needed, while efforts regarding security and protection garnered 14.8 percent of the required support. This funding gap limited the ability of humanitarian organizations to deliver essential services and support.[182] In addition to this, the Venezuelan government has completely rejected external humanitarian help, which impacted the effectiveness of aid efforts.[183] In July 2024, a crisis involving Venezuela and its presidential elections arose. These political tensions have created a wave of armed conflicts between the opposition and the government and massive waves of censorship, with consequences including torture and death. Venezuela's military leadership has long backed the corrupt regime in decisions regarding international aid. It is a clear impediment to completing any of the objectives found in the 2030 Agenda. This dispute has left Venezuela at risk of further social and economic turmoil.[184]

Analyzing the ongoing conflicts in South Sudan and Venezuela, which are deeply rooted in historical, political, and territorial disputes, is important. The consequences reach far beyond the bounds of these countries, and understanding how this situation impedes the SDGs is crucial.[185] SDG 17: Partnerships for the Goals centers around fostering international cooperation to address global challenges and promote sustainable development. The United Nations has faced criticism for its response to such conflicts. The effectiveness of the actions carried out by the United Nations has led to prolonged conflicts and human suffering. Therefore, resolving conflicts is vital not only for the immediate parties involved but also for the peace and stability of the world.[186]

Overall, it is also key to consider that active conflicts originate from different actions, like weak governmental institutions or imbalanced opportunities.[187] Governments, the United Nations, multilateral organizations, and affected populations hold various perspectives on advancing the 2030 Agenda in conflict zones.[188] Still, the effectiveness of the United Nations and the Humanitarian Response Plans (HRPs) depends on the complexity of the conflict at hand, especially when governments or armed groups reject help.[189] Engaging with relevant local actors, fostering partnerships at international levels, and building capable institutions are key to enhancing peace and coordinating efforts towards the 2030 Agenda.[190]

Case Study: Localization of the SDGs in Governments worldwide

Localizing the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) translates the 2030 Agenda for sustainable development within the local context. This includes defining, implementing, and monitoring local actions and strategies that contribute to the global achievement of the SDGs in each country.[191] Localization refers to how municipalities can implement SDGs by integrating them into their planning, budgets, and

launches-2021-venezuela-humanitarian-response
181 "Venezuela," USAID, accessed August 2, 2024, https://www.usaid.gov/humanitarian-assistance/venezuela-regional
182 USAID, "Venezuela."
183 IOM UN Migration, *Venezuela Crisis Response Plan 2021* (IOM UN Migration, 2011), https://crisisresponse.iom.int/sites/g/files/tmzbdl1481/files/appeal/pdf/2021_Venezuela_Bolivarian_Republic_of_Crisis_Response_Plan_2021.pdf
184 UNFPA, *Humanitarian Response in Venezuela 2019-2020. Presentation of activities of the components: Sexual and Reproductive Health (SHR) and Gender Based Violence (GVB)* (Caracas: UNFPA, 2020) https://venezuela.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/brochure_humanitarian_response.pdf
185 Muhammad Muzzammil Kamlani, "Israel: Impact on Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)," *LinkedIN*, October 14, 2023, https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/ongoing-conflict-palestine-israel-impact-sustainable-goals-kamlani-zvgbf
186 "International Law (SDG's): Regulation of Conflicts and International Relations," Journal of Lifestyle & SDG's Review, accessed August 2, 2024, https://www.sdgsreview.org/LifestyleJournal/article/view/1667
187 United Nations, *Regional Report: The Attainbment of SDGs in Conflict-Affected Countries in the Arab Region* (Lebanon: United Nations, 2021), https://mena.iom.int/sites/g/files/tmzbdl686/files/documents/SDG%20Report-FULL-EN.pdf
188 United Nations, *Regional Report: The Attainbment of SDGs in Conflict-Affected Countries in the Arab Region.*
189 "One Year of War in Sudan," ACLED Bringing Clarity to Crisis, accessed August 2, 2024, https://acleddata-com.translate.goog/2024/04/14/sudan-situation-update-april-2024-one-year-of-war-in-sudan/?_x_tr_sl=en&_x_tr_tl=es&_x_tr_hl=es&_x_tr_pto=sc
190 United Nations, *Regional Report: The Attainbment of SDGs in Conflict-Affected Countries in the Arab Region* (Lebanon: United Nations, 2021), https://mena.iom.int/sites/g/files/tmzbdl686/files/documents/SDG%20Report-FULL-EN.pdf
191 "The Localization of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)," European Commission, accessed August 2, 2024, https://urban.jrc.ec.europa.eu/sdgs?lng=en&ctx=udp

governance.[192] Municipalities are expected to implement the SDGs in their internal processes, such as the Integrated Development Plans (IDPs), Budget Processes, and Budget Implementation Plans (SDBIPs). However, implementing SDGs at a local government level has financial capacity, structured policies, institutional capacities, and technological development challenges.

Ninety-two percent of the regional governments from countries that responded to a survey by the Network of Regional Governments for Sustainable Development declared their familiarity with the SDGs and the importance of their implementation. Only 87 percent declared to have a specific policy of action to implement them.[193] Localizing the SDGs needs the involvement of all levels of governance and must engage participant stakeholders to ensure cohesion and effectiveness between national plans and policies. Regional governments, like the Åland Islands in Finland, have developed strategic goals through the creation of a 'vision workshop' in the year 2019.[194] In April 2019, these vision workshops managed to establish four vital steps for the implementation of the ABCD (Awareness and Visioning, Baseline Mapping, Creative Solutions, and Deciding on Priorities) Method.[195] This agenda, included in the vision workshops, is an act the government must take to apply sustainability principles to its working practices.

Recognizing the importance of familiarity with the SDGs and the importance of their implementation helps the process of creation and data for the Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs). Local Regional Governments were highly involved in the consultation process of the Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs) submitted between 2016 and 2018. In Africa, Benin

and Togo's governments were the most actively involved in bringing the vision at local levels to the process of the VNR. However, in Egypt, the local administrative levels were not involved in the reporting process, which led to limited authority.[196] Local Regional Governments in Latvia, Spain, Ireland, and Switzerland were involved in Europe. However, in Lithuania, municipal experts from the association of local authorities participated in the process.[197] Many cities have been leading in implementing SDGs and other global agendas, even before their government. This points to the importance of awareness-raising campaigns. Many countries face significant challenges localizing the SDGs due to weak institutions and governance systems. A key barrier is often the lack of responsive, inclusive, and accountable governance structures at a subnational level.[198] Despite the initial integration of SDGs, coherence in policies and addressing links between goals is not addressed.[199] Therefore, the participation of local actors must be strengthened, and joint action must be facilitated between local and regional governments.

Decentralized cooperation is publicly and privately funded aid provided by and through local authorities, networks, or other local actors. In Latin America, the development of cooperation between local and regional governments helps develop partnerships that focus on promoting democracy and improving the daily lives of local communities.[200] Although Brazil did not participate in a VNR in 2019, the efforts of local regional governments call for special attention. With the support of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the project 'Localizing Brazil' developed ways of spreading awareness, advocacy, and training for the localization of SDGs.[201] The implementation of this project helped cities

192 Mpilo Ngubane and Strinivassan Pillay, "An exploration of the Localization of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in Municipalities: A Case of South African Municipalities," *Sryahwa Publications* 5, no.1 (May 2023): 3-8, https://www.unitar.org/sites/default/files/media/file/Localization%20of%20the%20SDGs%20in%20Munnicipalities%20%28002%29.pdf

193 Rodrigo Messias, Juliana Grigorovski Vollmer and Francesco Sindico, "Localizing the SDGs: Regional Governments Paving the Way," *Network of Regional Governments for Sustainable Development* (Brussels: Network of Regional Governments for Sustainable Development, 2020), https://www.local2030.org/library/473/Localizing-the-SDGs-Regional-Governments-Paving-the-Way.pdf

194 Messias, *Network of Regional Governments for Sustainable Development.*

195 "Applying the ABCD Method," The Natural Step, accessed August 2, 2024, https://old.naturalstep.ca/abcd

196 United Cities and Local Governments, *Towards the Localization of the SDGs* (Barcelona: United Cities and Local Governments, 2018), https://www.uclg.org/sites/default/files/towards_the_localization_of_the_sdgs.pdf

197 UCLG, *Towards the Localization of the SDGs.*

198 Efraim Hernández, et al., *SDG Localization Baseline: How local-level actors are driving change and advancing the achievement of the 2030 Agenda* (Stockholm: Stockholm Environment Institute, 2021), https://www.sei.org/publications/sdg-localization-baseline-2030/

199 Efraim Hernández, et al., *SDG Localization Baseline: How local-level actors are driving change and advancing the achievement of the 2030 Agenda.*

200 "About Decentralised Cooperation," Platforma, accessed August 2, 2024, https://platforma-dev.eu/about-decentralised-cooperation/

201 United Cities and Local Governments, *Towards the Localization of the SDGs* (Barcelona: United Cities and Local Governments, 2018),

like Rio de Janeiro integrate the SDGs into their governmental plants.[202] In July 2024, the European Union (EU), with the help of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the Ministry of the Interior (MOI), launched a project for Thailand.[203] This project consisted of launching the first-ever 15 SDG provincial profiles to promote and support local actions that drive the completion of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Due to funding from the European Union (EU), these provincial profiles were created and developed to enhance understanding of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and provincial development strategies. Recognizing the factors that affect the analysis of open data from these provinces and local communities is key to assessing the challenges and progress across different regions.[204]

Practices on multilevel governance for SDG localization are also being implemented in several countries worldwide. In a study conducted by the United Nations Human Settlement Programme (UN-HABITAT), the importance of vertical integration was highlighted.[205] Vertical integration is the coordination and consistency of efforts across all levels of government.[206] Structured mechanisms and arrangements for implementing sustainable development strategies are vital for this type of integration. In 2015, the National Coordination Council for Social Policies (CNCPS) in Argentina was designated the responsible national linked to the Presidency in Argentina, monitoring the 2030 Agenda.[207] The incorporation of this SDG implementation process started with the signing of 22 out of the 24 Argentinian provinces. Later, this group ensured the transversal modernization and coordination functions. The Province of Córdoba reports the signing of the agreement with the CNCPS. It will begin adopting the 17 SDGs and their respective targets for its governmental management. A proper political and strategic articulation across the governments facilitates the implementation of campaigns in territories and provinces in Argentina.

There has been an increasing interest in local-level implementation of the 2030 Agenda. Despite the emergence of initiatives undertaken by local governments, the generalizability of the 2030 Agenda remains limited. For example, the Japanese government has prioritized regional revitalization as one of the three pillars of the national SDG Action Plan. This was carried out in 2020 to address the declining population and economic opportunities in rural Japan.[208] The Action Plan was implemented through the "SDG Future Cities 2018" initiative, a national-level initiative that supports the implementation of SDGs launched by the Office of Promotion of Overcoming Population Decline and Vitalizing Local Economy in Japan (OPOV).[209] The "SDG Future Cities 2018" initiative has a separate approach from the UN. The government selects municipalities that have made outstanding proposals for solving issues and creating new value in their three pillars: economy, society, and environment, to build a model for the SDGs in Japan.[210] In Tokyo, ten cities were selected as "SDGs Future City": Sumida, Shinagawa, Ota, Toshima, Itabashi, Adachi, Edogawa, Hino, Higashimurayama and Kiyose. In addition, five of these cities were selected as "Municipal SDGs Model Projects".[211] Japan

https://www.uclg.org/sites/default/files/towards_the_localization_of_the_sdgs.pdf
202   United Cities and Local Governments *Towards the Localization of the SDGs.*
203   UNDP, "15 SDG Provincial Profiles Launched to Promote Local Actions for the SDGs," *UNDP,* July 23, 2024, https://www.undp.org/thailand/press-releases/15-sdg-provincial-profiles-launched-promote-local-actions-sdgs-ENG
204   UNDP, "15 SDG Provincial Profiles Launched to Promote Local Actions for the SDGs."
205   United Nations Human Settlements Programme, *Multilevel Governance for SDG Localization* (Nairobi: UN-Habitat, 2022), https://unhabitat.org/sites/default/files/2023/05/mlg_for_sdg_localization_final_report.pdf
206   "UN/DESA Policy Brief #115: Horizontal and vertical integration are more necessary than ever for COVID-19 recovery and SDG implementation," United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs," last updated September 24, 2021, https://www.un.org/development/desa/dpad/publication/un-desa-policy-brief-115-horizontal-and-vertical-integration-are-more-necessary-than-ever-for-covid-19-recovery-and-sdg-implementation/#:~:text=This%20policy%20brief%20focuses%20on,across%20different%20levels%20of%20government.
207   UNDP, *Multilevel Governance for SDG Localization.*
208   Hiromi Masuda, Mahesti Okitasari, Kanako Morita, Tarek Katramiz, Hitomi Shimizu, Shun Kawakubo & Yatsuka Kataoka, "SDGs mainstreaming at the local level: case studies from Japan," *Sustainability Science* 16, (July 2021): 1761-1762, https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s11625-021-00977-0
209   Hiromi Masuda, Mahesti Okitasari, Kanako Morita, Tarek Katramiz, Hitomi Shimizu, Shun Kawakubo & Yatsuka Kataoka, "SDGs mainstreaming at the local level: case studies from Japan," 1761-1762.
210   "SDG Future City," Japan Up Close, published November 25, 2022, https://japanupclose.web-japan.org/policy/p20221125_1.html#:~:text=The%20%22SDGs%20Future%20City%22%20program,for%20the%20SDGs%20in%20Japan
211   "Outline of SDGs Future City and Municipal SDGs Model Project," Office of the Governor for Policy Planning, accessed August

and Argentina have successfully integrated SDGs into local policies and strategies through simple changes and Action Plans. However, not every country faces the same conditions as these.

On the other hand, linking recycling with the SDGs is a way of changing the perspective on how localization should begin. In Africa, recycling has brought a new avenue of job creation. It has also resulted in the improvement of the economic and political outlook for both rural and urban populations in the continent.[212] Historically, Africa faced significant challenges related to waste disposal, with many countries becoming dumping grounds for textile and electronic waste. Due to initiatives, including UPCycle Africa, the connection between reducing poverty and creating inclusive opportunities was made. This sets an example of how policies and actions centered in countries like Egypt and South Africa help ensure the implementation of the 2030 Agenda.[213] The focus on having sustainable global cities, mentioned in SDG 11: "Sustainable Cities and Communities", helps ensure the potency of adopting a government approach, providing targeted support through initiatives like recycling, and the implementation of Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs).[214]

Results of the Sustainable Development Goals

With six years left, only 17 percent of the targets of the Sustainable Development Goals are on track, 18 percent show moderate progress, 30 percent show slight progress, 18 percent show inactivity, and 17 percent show regression.[215] The progress in reducing extreme poverty has slowed down since the implementation of SDGs. Extreme poverty fell by 1.28

percentage points between 2000 and 2014 during the MDGs, while falling only 0.54 percentage points between 2015 and 2019 during the SDGs.[216] Additionally, the COVID-19 pandemic pushed 90 million people towards extreme poverty, having an impact mainly in Asia. This has reversed about three years of progress of SDG 1, which has no targets on track.[217]

SDG 2, Zero Hunger, shows the inequalities between development. In 2022, 6.8 percent (45 million) of children under five were affected by malnutrition, and over half lived in Central and Southern Asia, and almost one quarter in sub-Saharan Africa.[218] Only South-Eastern Asia, Latina America and the Caribbean, and Western Asia and Northern Africa are projected to achieve the malnutrition target, which is having below three percent of malnutrition prevalent by 2030.[219] The remaining regions, including Sub-Saharan Africa and Central and South Asia, have not progressed to achieve this goal's targets. The COVID-19 pandemic extremely exacerbated SDG 3 and global health. This reversed ten years of progress in life expectancy.[220] Most SDG 3 indicators are moving toward its completion. However, current trends are insufficient to achieve the targets set for 2030.

Overall, COVID-19 disrupted the progress of all Sustainable Development Goals. However, several other factors have interfered with the results of the Sustainable Development Goals. Firstly, the SDGs are deeply and complexly interconnected. This interconnected nature of the SDGs means that actions taken to achieve one goal can have consequences, positive or negative, on others.[221] For example, increasing access to affordable energy (SDG seven) through fossil fuels can lead to higher greenhouse gas emissions, affecting climate

2, 2024, https://www.sdgs.metro.tokyo.lg.jp/en/municipality-measures/sdgs-future-city/
212   Florence Akinyi Ogutu and Bessy Kathambi, "Recycling Gap, Africa's Perspective for Sustainable Waste Management," *Chapter Metrics Overview,* (September 2022): https://www.intechopen.com/chapters/84955
213   "UpCycle Africa", accessed August 2, 2024, https://upcycleafrica.org/
214   Hiromi Masuda, et al., "SDGs mainstreaming at the local level: case studies from Japan," *Sustainability Science* 16, (July 2021): 1761-1762, https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s11625-021-00977-0
215   United Nations, *The Sustainable Development Goals Report 2024,* (United Nations 2024) https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/report/2024/The-Sustainable-Development-Goals-Report-2024.pdf
216   United Nations Stats, *The Sustainable Development Goals Extended Report 2023 | No Poverty,* (United Nations, 2023) https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/report/2023/extended-report/Extended-Report_Goal-1.pdf
217   United Nations Stats, *The Sustainable Development Goals Extended Report 2023 | No Poverty.*
218   United Nations Stats, *The Sustainable Development Goals Extended Report 2023 | Zero Hunger,* (United Nations, 2023) https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/report/2023/extended-report/Extended-Report_Goal-2.pdf
219   United Nations Stats, *The Sustainable Development Goals Extended Report 2023 | Zero Hunger.*
220   United Nations, *The Sustainable Development Goals Report 2024,* (United Nations 2024) https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/report/2024/The-Sustainable-Development-Goals-Report-2024.pdf
221   Fabrice Renaud, et al. "Synergies and trade-offs between sustainable development goals and targets: innovative approaches and new perspectives," *Sustainability Science* 17, no. 1 (July 2022): 1317 - 1322, https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s11625-022-01209-9

goals (SDG 13). Additionally, achieving SDGs requires allocating resources. When prioritizing the achievement of a target, others might be left unattended. This is called an SDG trade-off, and its complexity leads to a slow achievement of the complete agenda. The more countries address these complex relationships, the more likely we are to provide solid evidence to integrate successful development policies in the future.[222] correctly

For example, in the achievement of SDG four, Quality Education plays a great role in achieving each of the SDGs, and the investment in education has been demonstrated as a great way of achieving other goals within the agenda.[223] Nonetheless, most countries worldwide will not meet SDG four by 2030. Approximately 84 million people will still be out of school, and only one in six countries will be close to achieving 95 percent of young people completing secondary education.[224] Quality education embodies one of the benefits of the SDGs tradeoff. SDG 15, which addresses the lack of development, can be partially attributed to the trade-off between conservation, equity, and climate change. Industrialization remains vital for economic growth (SDG eight).[225] Thus, governments must decide whether economic growth or environmental conservation should be prioritized. The Red List Index of Species Survival has reduced from 0.82 (1993) to 0.72 (2024), indicating more species are expected to become extinct soon.[226] The latter is mainly driven by agriculture and manufacturing industries that heavily rely on materials and extraction processes that damage the environment.

Fragmentation also hinders SDG completion. Fragmentation, a process of international division, has been a growing trend worldwide in recent years, represented in conflicts in Europe and the Middle East.[227] The Sustainable Development Report mentions that "each country's actions can have positive or negative effects on other countries," and these effects are called spillovers.[228] For example, Norway has the highest ranking for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), with a score of 82.23 on the SDG Progress Index. However, it ranks poorly on the Spillover Index with a score of 57.6.[229] This is mainly because of environmental issues. While Norway emits a certain amount of CO2, it exports fossil fuels that produce almost 13 times that amount of CO2. [230] When countries do not address their spillovers, it harms others. Additionally, with increasing fragmentation, negative spillovers are more probable due to a reduced consideration of the international stage and the global agenda. Increasing fragmentation has hindered the development of SDG 16: Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions. In 2023, the number of civilians killed in armed conflicts rose 72 percent, which was reversing a downward trend from 2016 to 2019.[231]

Furthermore, the achievement of SDGs depends on three principal areas: implementation, governance, and stability.[232] Thus, incorporating SDGs in local governmental agendas ("localization") remains essential for the goals. Localization

222 Renaud, et al. "Synergies and trade-offs between sustainable development goals and targets: innovative approaches and new perspectives," 1317 - 1322.
223 Halefom Gezaei Abera, "The Role of Education in Achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs): A Global Evidence Based Research Article," *International Journal of Social Science and Education Research Studies* 3, no. 1 (January 2023): 67- 81, https://ijssers.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/01/09-1201-2023.pdf
224 European Agency, "Progress towards Sustainable Development Goal 4 on quality education - new report," *European Agency,* August 9, 2022, https://www.european-agency.org/news/progress-sdg4
225 The Conversation, "Industrialisation is still vital to economic development but some countries are struggling to reap its benefits," *The Conversation,* March 22, 2024, https://theconversation.com/industrialisation-is-still-vital-to-economic-development-but-some-countries-are-struggling-to-reap-its-benefits-225406
226 United Nations, *The Sustainable Development Goals Report 2024,* (United Nations 2024) https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/report/2024/The-Sustainable-Development-Goals-Report-2024.pdf
227 "The Great Fragmentation," Istituto Per Gli Studi di Politica Internazionale, accessed August 10, 2024, https://www.ispionline.it/en/the-world-in-2024-the-great-fragmentation
228 "Sustainable Development Report | Spillover Score," Sustainable Development Report , accessed August 10, 2024, https://dashboards.sdgindex.org/map/spillovers
229 Sustainable Development Report, "Sustainable Development Report | Spillover Score."
230 Jeremy Moss and Steve Pye, *Why fossil fuel exporters must accept their emissions liability* (Sydney: UNSW Sydney, 2023), https://climatejustice.co/wp-content/uploads/2023/11/JeremyMoss-Export-Emissions-Report-d4.pdf
231 United Nations, *The Sustainable Development Goals Report 2024,* (United Nations 2024) https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/report/2024/The-Sustainable-Development-Goals-Report-2024.pdf
232 Walter Leal Filho, "When the alarm bells ring: Why the UN sustainable development goals may not be achieved by 2030," *Journal of Cleaner Production* 407, no. 137108 (June 2023): https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0959652623012660?fr=RR-7&ref=pdf_download&rr=8b1c958e0bd43ef5

lies in the intersection of implementation and governance. The implementation of SDG-related programs should be tailored to local contexts and supported by effective governance to ensure coordination between different actors.[233]

Governance remains a great challenge for achieving the SDGs. Governance refers to a government's ability to enforce rules and deliver services.[234] In the context of the SDGs, governance refers to the ability of the United Nations to make national governments adopt the agenda in their actions and hold governments accountable for their progress. When talking about global governance, international institutions, such as the United Nations, must be able to create and enforce policies.[235] In this view, global governance refers to the coordination of countries and other international and national organizations. Today, global governance is hindered by "intensifying geopolitical and economic rivalry, which have left the world gridlocked in global dysfunction," as mentioned by UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres.[236] Without global governance, the SDGs will not be achieved. Without accountability mechanisms, the SDGs will remain an agenda, not concrete actions or policies.

An example is the progress made in SDG 13, Climate Action. As fossil fuel subsidies hit a historic high globally and the highest-ever greenhouse gas emissions in 2022, it is clear that countries do not follow recommended policies on climate change.[237] SDG 13 has most of its targets regressing or with marginal progress, meaning that more restrictive policies are needed to achieve this goal.[238] The Climate Action Goal is a clear example of the need for global governance and negative trade-offs, resulting in an ineffective performance from most countries in SDG 13. Today, efficient enforcement mechanisms still need to be improved. For example, the UN's mechanism, the Conference of the Parties of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP), is widely criticized for its ineffectiveness in holding polluting countries and groups accountable.[239]

Bloc Analysis

Points of Division

The SDG Index summarizes the Sustainable Development Report and each country's performance. On a one to 100 scale, the index reflects a country's progress towards optimal SDG performance. A score of 100 represents the full achievement of all the goals. Missing data is one of the main limitations of the SDG Index. Thus, countries missing more than 20 percent of the data are not ranked. The SDG Index is calculated by establishing performance thresholds per target, comparing them to those of other countries, and putting together each target performance to form one index.[240] The SDG Index is a great tool for tracking the progress of the SDGs, comparing different countries' progress, and holding countries accountable for their actions. Comparing countries with similar SDG Index Scores can help build multilateral relations and create strong policies that can achieve progress. The SDG Index can also help identify trends within countries that may be hindering their goals.

For each bloc, there are specific score ranges. The first bloc is composed of countries with scores from 100 to 75. Forty-two countries, from Albania (42nd) to Finland (first), form this bloc. They represent countries that have successfully implemented SDGs in their local agendas and have made effective efforts towards completing the 2030 Agenda. Countries from this bloc should recommend policy localization strategies for other countries to follow the path of successful implementation. The

233   Leal Filho, "When the alarm bells ring: Why the UN sustainable development goals may not be achieved by 2030."
234   Francis Fukuyama, *What is Governance?* (DC: Center for Global Development, 2013), https://www.files.ethz.ch/isn/159182/1426906_file_Fukuyama_What_Is_Governance.pdf
235   William D. Coleman, "Global Governance," *Social Sciences | International Encyclopedia of the Social and Behavioral Sciences Second Edition,* (2015), https://www.sciencedirect.com/topics/social-sciences/global-governance
236   Stewart Patrick, "Rules of Order: Assessing the State of Global Governance," Carnegie Endowment For International Peace, published September 12, 2023, https://carnegieendowment.org/research/2023/09/rules-of-order-assessing-the-state-of-global-governance?lang=en
237   United Nations, *The Sustainable Development Goals Report 2024,* (United Nations 2024) https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/report/2024/The-Sustainable-Development-Goals-Report-2024.pdf
238   United Nations, *The Sustainable Development Goals Report 2024.*
239   The Conversation, "COP27 failed. So why continue these UN climate summits?" *The Conversation*, November 30, 2022, https://theconversation.com/cop27-failed-so-why-continue-with-these-un-climate-summits-195348
240   https://dashboards.sdgindex.org/chapters/methodology#limitations

second bloc contains 60 countries that have scores between 65 and 75. This bloc represents groups that are on track with the implementation of SDGs in their local agendas but have yet to make effective efforts toward the completion of the agenda. Countries should analyze the successes and failures of policy implementation within this section, which holds countries ranging from the United States to Turkmenistan. Even though diverse countries form this bloc, it is important to analyze governmental transitions, politics, the localization of the goals, and the incorporation of civil society in pursuing the goals. Finally, the last bloc contains countries with scores of 65 or lower. This group represents countries that have been less engaged with the SDGs, have not incorporated the goals in their local agendas, and have not made effective efforts toward completing the 2030 Agenda. These countries should analyze the reason for policy failures through political institutions, the country's history, the interference of other political factors (such as wars, democratic status, etc.), and the localization of agendas.

Countries That Have Successfully Implemented the SDGs in Their Local Agendas and Rank High on the SDG Index

With a score of 86.35 out of 100, Finland has the highest score in the Sustainable Development Report.[241] The current Finnish government adopted a national implementation plan for its four-year term until 2019. According to SDG Watch Europe, Finland has aligned with a broad sustainable development strategy, Commitment 2050, which was developed by the National Commission on Sustainable Development.[242] Finland is a leader in the preparation and cooperation for the Voluntary National Review, which builds on existing mechanisms relying on data, evaluations, research, and reports.[243] Countries with high scores in the Sustainable Development Report include Georgia, with a score of 74.91.

Additionally, this bloc includes Estonia, with a score of 80.46; Moldova, with a score of 78.81; and Belarus, with a score of 78.60. These countries have access to data and reliable sources of information within the country, and they usually have strong support from governmental organizations within the country.[244] However, the threat of corruption remains a significant issue in these countries. Belarus has achieved a high score in the Sustainable Development Reports over the years despite concerns about corruption in the country. Even though Belarus ranks 34th out of 166 countries in the Sustainable Development Index for 2022, this ranking reflects progress in areas including poverty eradication, gender equality, and access to education and healthcare.[245] These countries have adopted strategies to integrate the SDGs into their policies through policy alignment, public engagement, and data-driven decision-making. The pace of SDG progress varies across countries, which is why Nordic countries tend to lead in SDG achievement.[246] Countries that find themselves in this bloc are countries that have sufficient resources, as well as economic, political, and social stability. This helps them face limitations and implement Action Plans to assess issues immediately.

Countries That Are on Track With Implementing the SDGs in Their Local Agendas and Rank Moderately on the SDG Index

Within this bloc, there are many causes of insufficient and ineffective implementation of SDGs. For example, the United States, which has the biggest economy in the world, needs to catch up on multiple goals. These include SDG 3 (Good Health and Wellbeing) due to the high costs of medical attention.[247] The United States has "generally ignored" the SDGs since multiple presidential administrations have prioritized domestic policies over the 2030 Agenda.[248] The US has not directly localized and implemented the goals since it

241 "Rankings," Sustainable Development Report, accessed August 11, 2024, https://dashboards.sdgindex.org/rankings
242 "Finland," SDG Watch Europe, accessed August 11, 2024, https://sdgwatcheurope.org/finland/
243 "Finland," Sustainable Development Goals | Knowledge Platform, accessed August 11, 2024, https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/memberstates/finland
244 The SDGs and the UN Summit of the Future, *The Sustainable Development Report 2024* (The SDGs and the UN Summit of the Future, 2024), https://s3.amazonaws.com/sustainabledevelopment.report/2024/executive-summary.pdf
245 "Rankings," Sustainable Development Report, accessed August 11, 2024, https://dashboards.sdgindex.org/rankings
246 The SDGs and the UN Summit of the Future, *The Sustainable Development Report 2024* (The SDGs and the UN Summit of the Future, 2024), https://s3.amazonaws.com/sustainabledevelopment.report/2024/executive-summary.pdf
247 https://theconversation.com/the-us-committed-to-meet-the-uns-sustainable-development-goals-but-like-other-countries-its-struggling-to-make-progress-212585
248 https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/Pipa_SDGs-and-the-US_The-Environmental-Forum.pdf

has only increased its SDG Score from 73.02 (2015) to 74.43 (2023) in eight years.[249] Another country found in the bloc is Vietnam, with a score of 73.32 in 2023. Nonetheless, the country has increased its score from 57.6 in 2016 to 73.3 in 2023, a 28 percent increase. This significant increase is a result of plans implemented directly by the government, mainly through Vietnam's first minister and national UN offices.[250] Vietnam holds a higher and faster rate of improvement over a shorter period of time than the United States. Overall, the bloc is filled with Eastern European, Baltic, Latin American, and Central Asian countries.

Countries That Have Low Engagement With the SDGs and Score Low on the SDG Index

With a score of 40.14 out of 100, South Sudan has the lowest score in the Sustainable Development Report. Ending the ongoing war and ensuring food security remain the key focus. Countries including South Sudan, Guinea-Bissau, Lesotho, Pakistan, and Djibouti suffer from a lack of reliable data to measure progress towards the completion of the SDGs.[251] According to the Atlas of Sustainable Development of 2023, countries that are particularly vulnerable to external shocks, like climate change and instability, struggle to implement policies that mitigate the impact of such shocks. While there have been efforts to implement the 2030 Agenda in Guinea-Bissau, engagement remains limited.[252] Poverty is widespread in Guinea-Bissau, Malawi, and Comoros.[253] Although there have been attempts to align countries' national development plans in this bloc, the integration has not been promising.

To address this, the UN has been working to strengthen the UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF), a core instrument for providing strategic direction for UN activities.[254] The focus on specific areas, including governance, economic development, and social inclusion, does not fully reflect the depth of the SDGs. Still, there is an existing recognition among these countries of the challenges they face in achieving the SDGs. For instance, Guinea-Bissau has tried to align the national development plan with the SDGs despite not being able to submit Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs).[255] Countries that find themselves in this bloc are developing states that currently face crises regarding debt, poverty, and the consequences of climate change.[256] While efforts made by these countries face limitations nationally and globally, structural reforms in infrastructure, the economy, and social inclusion must be created to assist their development efforts.

Committee Mission

The High-Level Political Forum (HLPF) is central to the review of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).[257] The SDGs aim to transform our world. These goals are a call to end poverty, hunger, and inequality and protect the planet. This forum meets annually under the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) and every four years at the level of Heads of State and Government under the General Assembly.[258] The High-Level Political Forum (HLPF) seeks to provide

249 https://dashboards.sdgindex.org/rankings
250 https://vietnam.un.org/sites/default/files/2020-08/ke%20hoach%20hanh%20dong%20quoc%20gia_04-07-ENG_CHXHCNVN.pdf
251 The World Bank, *Atlas of Sustainable Development Goals 2018: From World Development Indicators,* (Washington: International Bank for reconstruction and Development, 2018), https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/590681527864542864/pdf/126797-PUB-PUBLIC.pdf
252 United Nations, *Civil society consultant to strengthen the multi-stakeholder dimension of national development planning and SDG mainstreaming in Guinea-Bissau,* (Guinea-Bissau: United Nations, 2020), https://sdgs.un.org/sites/default/files/2021-08/StakeholderEngagement_Guinea-Bissau.pdf
253 World Bank Group, "Escaping Poverty in Malawi Requires Improved Agricultural Productivity, Climate Resilience, and Structural Transformation," news release, November 8, 2022, https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/press-release/2022/11/08/escaping-poverty-in-malawi-requires-improved-agricultural-productivity-climate-resilience-and-structural-transformation
254 "The UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework," United Nations System Staff College, accessed August 2, 2024, https://www.unssc.org/courses/un-sustainable-development-cooperation-framework-1
255 United Nations, *Civil society consultant to strengthen the multi-stakeholder dimension of national development planning and SDG mainstreaming in Guinea-Bissau,* (Guinea-Bissau: United Nations, 2020), https://sdgs.un.org/sites/default/files/2021-08/StakeholderEngagement_Guinea-Bissau.pdf
256 United Nations, "Sustainable Development Goals Unreachable without Reformed Financial Architecture, Stronger Political Will, Speakers Say as Second Committee Opens General Debate," news release, October 2, 2023, https://press.un.org/en/2023/gaef3583.doc.htm
257 "High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development," United Nations, accessed August 5, 2024, https://hlpf.un.org/
258 "High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development," UN Women, accessed August 5, 2024, https://www.unwomen.org/en/how-we-work/intergovernmental-support/hlpf-on-sustainable-development

political leadership, guidance, and recommendations to its member states. In collaboration with other organizations and governments, the HLPF aims to integrate the economic, social, and environmental dimensions of sustainable development.[259] As the lead UN agency responsible for the implementation of the SDGs, the HLPF supports creating attainable, modern, and transparent goals in the 2045 Agenda.[260] These goals need to be met, considering the minimal progress made. This must be done while still bearing in mind transparency and efficiency, as well as social, economic, and political status. The progress these countries made toward the 2030 Agenda should be kept in mind while reviewing its specific goals.[261] HLPF's mission also includes conducting regular and inclusive reviews of progress at the national and sub-national levels.[262] Still, countries seem to struggle with issues involving transparency and accountability. HLPF's main goal remains to be the main direction provider through achievable and workable goals. These goals can be adapted to each country in the light of their unique social, economic, and political status.[263] Delegates in The High-Level Political Forum (HLPF) must seek to establish deep-rooted change and proposals that will build an Agenda all member states can fulfill.

259 "High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development - HLPF," Earth Negotiation Bulletin, accessed August 5, 2024, https://enb.iisd.org/negotiations/high-level-political-forum-sustainable-development-hlpf#:~:text=The%20High%2Dlevel%20Political%20Forum,the%20UNGA%20every%20four%20years.
260 "High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF 2024)," Earth Negotiation Bulletin, accessed August 5, 2024, https://enb.iisd.org/high-level-political-forum-hlpf-2024
261 "High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development," United Nations, accessed August 5, 2024, https://hlpf.un.org/
262 "Voluntary National Reviews," United Nations | High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development, accessed August 5, 2024, https://hlpf.un.org/vnrs
263 Joop Theunissen, *Introduction to the HLPF and VNRs* (New York: United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, 2019), https://www.unescap.org/sites/default/files/ESCAP1%20-%20Joop%27s%20Opening.pdf

Research and Preparation Questions

Your dais has prepared the following research and preparation questions as a means of providing guidance for your research process. These questions should be carefully considered, as they embody some of the main critical thought and learning objectives surrounding your topic.

Topic A

1. How can different nations' physical security be preserved during such conflict and tension?

2. How can the HLPF ensure that economic growth does not come at the expense of environmental sustainability and social equity?

3. What are the historical successes of the SDGs in modern history, and how can they be applied to today's world?

4. After the COVID-19 pandemic, what obstacles must be addressed to ensure the SDGs are met?

5. How can the HLPF be improved to hold countries accountable for their SDG commitments?

6. How should the HLPF address the global inequalities that impact the ability of different countries to achieve sustainable development?

Important Documents

Topic A

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