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HIGH LEVEL POLITICAL FORUM 2021



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“As we present this paper in 2021, we remember the light that helped guide its preparation, and that shone so brightly over previous sessions of the HLPF. Dr Kathryn Adams was a friend, a colleague, and an inspiration. The NGO Major Group would like to dedicate this position paper to her memory, and her work.”

Introduction



As the NGO Major Group noted in the introduction to the High Level Political Forum Position Paper from 2020, the global COVID-19 pandemic intensifies the need for accelerated, united action. In 2021, this urgency is amplified by the overwhelming toll the pandemic has taken on global health, social and environmental security, and meaningful progress on Agenda 2030 and leaving no one behind.







Women, youth, Indigenous Peoples and marginalized groups are most affected by COVID-19. The rise of populism, isolationism, xenophobia, disregard for multilateral agreements, sanctions, exploitation of animals and the environment, and regressive stances on human rights present obstacles to sustainable development. Regional and national conflicts, proxy civil wars, accelerating climate crisis, and threats to biodiversity demonstrate this is a moment of extreme peril and opportunity.

In this document, we have identified structural barriers affecting Sustainable Development Goal progress. In addition to fighting COVID-19, we must challenge the underlying social, economic, environmental, and political factors that exacerbate the effects of the pandemic, including economic inequality, poverty, lack of democracy, gender-based violence and inequality, lack of access to WASH, and various forms of exploitation including human trafficking and environmental destruction. Economic growth without ethical social development is self-defeating. We must invest in human rights and the empowerment of marginalized groups in vulnerable conditions.

The pandemic has highlighted inadequate and insecure public health and social protection systems. However, the COVAX initiative has shown how quickly we can take collective action for global good. This positive, yet rare, initiative is tempered by fragmented thinking and action.

Least Developed Countries, those with significant rural populations, and Small Island Developing States face additional challenges. Natural disasters, scarcity of resources, lack of strategic financing, and high levels of national debt are particularly damaging elements of myriad intersecting challenges.

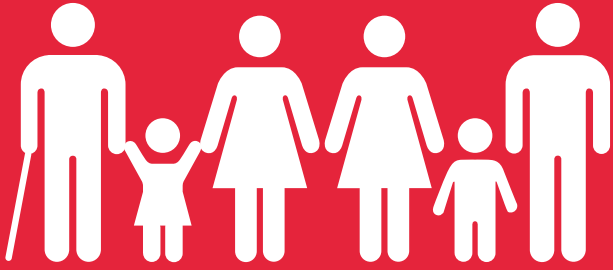
This document presents concerns and opportunities on specific Goals. The following are the overarching appeals we are highlighting:

-  For the links between human rights and sustainable development to be recognized as innate, and acted upon;
-  For the global collection of disaggregated data to inform decision-making and national Action Plans based on concrete evidence;
-  For the inclusion of civil society organizations in all levels of policy-making;
-  For the voices of marginalized groups to be protected and amplified;
-  For ending the war we have waged with nature, working towards harmony with nature, sustainable food systems, resilient water management, ensuring the wellbeing of humans, animals, and the environment, and reversing current existential environmental threats; and
-  For Member States to prioritize those excluded and marginalized communities most affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, and to ensure that basic services and social protection systems are universal and equitable. This must include a commitment to preventing future pandemics.

Michelle Bachelet, UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, said in November 2020, “People who have been pushed behind, and rendered powerless, by generations of discrimination, have systematically unequal access to services and opportunities... They are placed at a structural disadvantage when it comes to any threat.”

The NGO Major Group stands in support of this statement and unites in calling for Member States to accelerate their actions to secure the 2030 Agenda and ensure that truly no one is left behind.

1 NO POVERTY



NO POVERTY



How should governments implement this SDG and related targets?

To eradicate poverty, governments should place both short- and long-term poverty-alleviation policies at the forefront of their national economic planning, and this should play an integral role in the allocation of finances and resources and provision of access to public services across all sectors. A multisectoral, communal response should be prioritized to ensure grassroots participation and an equitable implementation of these policies. Additionally, governments should enable and amplify the role of civil society organizations (CSOs) in the alleviation of poverty, as they have a direct relationship with the disenfranchised, marginalized and vulnerable groups, including youth, older people, persons with physical and mental disabilities, persons living in subsistence economies, displaced persons and indigenous communities requiring immediate attention. Governments should respect, protect and fulfil human rights, including the rights to a minimum standard of living, to social security and to a dignified life.

Governments must protect the natural resources and cultural heritage upon which poor and indigenous people depend, ensure equitable access and ownership of land, availability of technical or financial assistance, basic infrastructure and services, decent work and legal protection of vulnerable groups including indigenous communities, refugees and migrant laborers. Governments must also ensure that the frameworks to boost national economies and eradicate poverty do not perpetuate harm to small-holder farmers, small businesses and unprotected workers.

Governments must also invest in more proactive, innovative, local and sustainable options to alleviate poverty, such as a single platform where a nation's poverty data can be shared and analysed, and strengthen already existing agencies and pathways to eradicate poverty in a sustainable manner, so that efforts are not duplicated and resources are not wasted.



What structural obstacles hinder the implementation of this SDG (at local, national, regional, and/or global levels)?

There are a broad range of impediments to SDG 1 implementation including corruption, limits on civic space, inadequate execution, poor allocation of resources and social inequality. Facilitating effective and transparent allocation of resources, independence of the press, the existence of dissent, and the independence of NGOs to investigate woeful practices and demand accountability is critical to SDG 1. The pooling of monetary resources to aid in poverty reduction without the existence of a people-centric and a climate adaptive grassroots approach risks only benefiting those with wealth and power.

Lack of accountability, lack of transparency, and unnecessary bureaucratic procedures often also result in ineffective implementation of schemes and interventions meant to lift communities out of poverty.

Finally, underlying inequalities have been dangerously exposed by the pandemic and global cooperation is crucial to save lives. Intergovernmental collaboration and free exchange of



knowledge, resources and pathways prioritizing the common good are imperative to lift people out of poverty globally. Lastly, It is essential that all donor governments urgently commit a minimum of 0.7% of GDP to ODA.



What role can civil society play in achieving this SDG?

Civil society can support policymakers in a concerted, multisectoral and multistakeholder war against poverty by creating mechanisms for communication and coordination between international and local organizations representing citizens and governments in order to achieve an equitable approach to cooperation, obtaining data and information, and exchanging experiences to address poverty and maximize impact. CSOs can complement government alleviation programs by adopting community-based, citizen-centric and context-tailored assistance, using evidence-based and innovative solutions to lift people out of poverty. Civil society is also able to provide supplementary data, bridging gaps where governments may fall short, to enable effective implementation of policies and equitable distribution of resources.



How does this SDG support or connect with other goals in the 2030 Agenda? With specific targets of other international frameworks?

Systemic deprivations in the other SDGs affect and exacerbate poverty in a country. Putting an end to poverty is essential and stimulates progress toward all the other SDGs. Due to its interdependent nature, eliminating poverty requires a multidisciplinary approach that interlinks with all SDGs. This includes ending hunger, malnutrition and improving access to food and clean water; achieving universal health coverage and overall well-being; equal access to quality education throughout life; gender equality; improving safe, clean energy access through renewable energy; decent work; ensuring internet access for all; reduced inequalities and economic, social and political inclusion; inclusive, integrated and balanced urban and territorial development; sustainably, locally produced and equitable sustainable consumption and production; reduction of climate change effects; and reduction of conflicts driven by wealth inequalities, as well as full participation in civic life.



Are there emerging issues related to this SDG that should be noted?

COVID-19 has amplified existing manifestations of poverty and created new ones. Most targets of SDG 1 will be affected by significant setbacks and are increasingly out of reach. There is also insufficient solidarity between high income countries and other countries, which has been highlighted by the inequalities in vaccine access across countries. While many institutions called for stronger solidarity, development cooperation remains inadequate. Another emerging issue is a demographic one, with developing countries facing higher levels of ageing with fewer resources to turn the silver tsunami into the silver economy.

2 ZERO HUNGER



ZERO HUNGER



How should governments implement this SDG and related targets?

The combined problems of undernutrition, food insecurity, the global nutrition transition, the dual epidemics of communicable and noncommunicable diseases, global and local conflict and instability, and ecological degradation all represent urgent challenges to SDG 2. Efforts must focus on unbiased, evidence-driven intergovernmental recommendations and interventions. These include the World Health Organization Global Strategy on Diet, Physical Activity, and Health, the Decade of Healthy Ageing and other established recommendations regarding macronutrient and micronutrient malnutrition prevention, including plant-based dietary diversification; fortification of food staples with essential vitamins and minerals; low-cost supplementation for vulnerable groups such as children and women of childbearing age; public nutrition education; promotion of meaningful access to information about markets and sustainable agricultural technologies, protection of local ancestral seed repositories, and efforts to control diseases such as malaria, diarrhea, and parasitic infections. Investment in technologies for data collection on nutrition and food security is also important.

Achieving a just transition from exploitative food systems that threaten human rights, food security, food sovereignty, animal welfare, and biodiversity, to systems that optimize nutrition, health, and environmental sustainability is essential. Governments can act on the recommendations of the 2020 State of Food Security and Nutrition report, which highlight the hidden environmental and health costs of diets high in animal source foods. It is critical that governments take actions to make healthy, sustainable diets affordable to all by shifting taxes and subsidies. Awareness programs and transparent, effective labeling schemes are needed to encourage healthier and more sustainable consumer choices.

Another important action for governments is to set sustainable public procurement standards and to eliminate food waste. The dominant, intensive form of agriculture must be transformed, as it edges out smallholders, destabilizes communities, pollutes ecosystems, and contributes to antimicrobial resistance and zoonotic risk through high stocking densities of animals. Instead, enabling conditions must be created by governments to scale up regenerative and agroecological solutions. Digitalization can be harnessed to improve access to markets and food and nutrition by all, including the poor and vulnerable.



What structural obstacles hinder the implementation of this SDG (at local, national, regional, and/or global levels)?

Structural obstacles to the implementation of SDG 2 could be addressed by establishing an integrated systems approach that recognizes connections between food production systems, the risk for communicable and noncommunicable diseases and related public health outcomes, access to clean water and sanitation, land use strategies, conflict resolution, access to humanitarian relief, and other social and environmental determinants of health. Global food imperialism; the policies of wealthy nations; problematic private-public partnerships; short-sighted economic models; a lack of information services; and subsidies and industry exemptions for exploitative practices must be addressed. Other potential solutions include



the integration of health, nutrition, and agriculture policy; the economic empowerment of women; and the elimination of industry's influence on food policy. Interventions could also include participatory and inclusive decision-making, drawing upon locally available resources.



What role can civil society play in achieving this SDG?

Civil society is positioned to influence global and local food policy and research, including through the provision of information on household food security and markets; the strengthening of administrative data systems for nutrition and health outcomes; representation on municipal level and high government decision making bodies; participatory planning and local ownership; government accountability projects; and other forms of advocacy. Consumer-driven actions can also support a shift from large agricultural conglomerates that abuse and exploit people, animals, and the environment to more ethical and sustainable food systems.



How does this SDG support or connect with other goals in the 2030 Agenda? With specific targets of other international frameworks?

SDG 2 is related to all the SDGs, as well as the following processes and meetings: UNFCCC and CBD CoPs; UN Food Systems Summit; High-Level Meeting on the Water-Related Goals and Targets of the 2030 Agenda; 2nd UN Ocean Conference; 2nd Global Sustainable Transport Conference; FAO's Globally Important Agricultural Heritage Systems (GIAHS); and the UNESCO World Conference on Education for Sustainable Development.



Are there emerging issues related to this SDG that should be noted?

The COVID-19 pandemic, the risk for future pandemics, the climate crisis, conflict and migration patterns, and increasing inequalities related to water and land use are all relevant. Although current data reveals serious delays in meeting many of the SDGs, SDG 2 stands out due to the weak progress witnessed in many regions. Food insecurity and undernourishment have worsened in much of Asia, Africa, Latin America, and other areas of the world. Efforts must focus on holistic, ambitious, and evidence-based policies and practices that account for the interplay between agricultural practices, food sovereignty, access to safe water and nutritious whole foods, environmental degradation, climate change, peace and conflict resolution, and noncommunicable and communicable disease risk, including the potential for zoonoses and the next pandemic.

3

GOOD HEALTH
AND WELL-BEING



GOOD HEALTH AND WELL-BEING



How should governments implement this SDG and related targets?

To achieve SDG 3 and to address related targets — including those focused on maternal and child mortality, communicable and noncommunicable diseases, hazardous exposures, mental health, and the effects of violence and injuries — governments must prioritize prevention and public health promotion, universal access to healthcare, and workforce solutions. The COVID-19 pandemic has underscored the fact that the management of ecosystems and the treatment of animals has an undeniable impact on the global capacity to achieve SDG 3, despite their notable omission from SDG targets. Therefore, the effective implementation of SDG 3 necessitates government-led adoption of a just One Health approach, which places justice, prevention, and connections between people, animals, and the environment at the heart of global and local policy, research, and practice. The right to a safe, clean, healthy, and sustainable environment is key to achieving good health and well-being, and governments should collectively deliver on the UN Decade of Ecosystem Restoration and global goals for climate and nature. Governments should avoid investment in, and loans and subsidies for, technologies that are harmful to health. Ensuring healthy lives and promoting well-being for all requires acting upon the connections between health and other human rights and environmental ethics, as well as systematically addressing the various forms of discrimination that are linked to healthcare access and outcomes.



What structural obstacles hinder the implementation of this SDG (at local, national, regional, and/or global levels)?

Obstacles hindering the implementation of SDG 3 could be removed through a more equitable distribution of funding, healthcare resources, adequate social protection, and a stronger focus on health literacy. A coordinated international system of support should prioritize low-resource health systems in Least Developed Countries and vulnerable and marginalized populations, including refugees, migrant workers, stateless individuals, Indigenous peoples, women, and children. These considerations are particularly pertinent to the achievement of target 3.8, and to the prevention of and response to rising rates of communicable and noncommunicable diseases.

In particular, the COVID-19 pandemic has created a number of new structural obstacles, including delays in the provision of preventive services, access to healthcare, and misinformation. Specifically, the pandemic has interrupted immunization programs and sexual and reproductive and other health services in dozens of countries, which will require a reinitiation and acceleration of these efforts, including international investment in these programs.

Finally, a lack of awareness and action on the linkages between environment and health puts many people at risk of poor health outcomes, ranging from zoonotic disease risks to the impact of polluted air and waterways.



What role can civil society play in achieving this SDG?

Civil society can play a pivotal role in the achievement of SDG 3, including through public information, education, and outreach; the promotion and dissemination of scalable, sustainable, and evidence-based solutions; cross-sectoral coalition action; government accountability projects; and other forms of direct and indirect advocacy. Nonetheless, it is incumbent upon international and local public institutions to provide the leadership and resources necessary to achieve SDG 3.



How does this SDG support or connect with other goals in the 2030 Agenda? With specific targets of other international frameworks?

An interlinked approach to SDG 3 is critical, since improvements in communicable and noncommunicable disease outcomes and maternal and infant health outcomes, for instance, cannot be addressed without adequate attention to all SDGs. A coordinated, equitable, gendered, non-discriminatory, and interspecies lens must be applied.



Are there emerging issues related to this SDG that should be noted?

The COVID-19 pandemic has underscored the need for holistic evidence-based public health strategies, including increased investment to prevent future pandemics and related social, economic, and political challenges. Nearly 75 percent of emerging infectious diseases are zoonoses, and environmental degradation has an increasingly adverse impact on public health.

The COVID-19 pandemic has also revealed critical fissures in international healthcare systems, including weaknesses in preparedness and response. As set out above, an immediate priority is equitable access to vaccines for COVID-19 to ensure global coverage. Donor governments must commit to increasing funding; dose sharing of existing vaccine stocks; a patent waiver; and technology sharing to enable rapid scaling of development and distribution of vaccines.

In the wake of the pandemic and its impact on the 2030 Agenda, it is clear that governments must prioritize increased funding and general commitments to target 3.8. There is also a need to strengthen the implementation of target 3.d to provide capacity to protect against future epidemics and pandemics.

As importantly, there is an urgent need to prevent social and environmental injustices, including the climate crisis, forced migration, environmental racism, ageism and other forms of discrimination (included those embedded in laws), and inequitable access to the efficient provision of high-quality healthcare. To ensure health and well-being for all, efforts should attend to social and environmental determinants of health, including adequate shelter; clean and safe air and water; optimal nutrition; and healthy natural and built environments. It has also become evident that arts and culture play a critical role in well-being and resilience.

8 DECENT WORK AND ECONOMIC GROWTH



DECENT WORK AND ECONOMIC GROWTH



How should governments implement this SDG and related targets?

Governments must protect the rights of all workers, ensuring that labor protections are extended to all groups in formal and informal economies, and high-risk sectors, through strengthening and enforcing national laws in line with ILO recommendations and international human rights frameworks. Further, they should ensure that those who have lost employment due to the COVID-19 pandemic have opportunities to regain their livelihoods, and that the Micro-, Small- and Medium-Enterprises sector is prioritized for stimulus packages. Inclusive recruitment processes, education, and training should be promoted to tackle systemic inequality and discrimination that increase the risk of certain groups falling victim to labor exploitation and contemporary forms of slavery, taking into account intersectional factors and harmful traditional practices.

Governments must engage in cross-border collaboration and data-sharing to tackle contemporary forms of slavery, and bilateral and multilateral agreements on cooperation, repatriation, and labor migration must be improved.

Economic sectors at high risk of, or with high prevalence of, exploitation should be identified, and governments should work with businesses and civil society to mitigate risks of exploitation, including forced labor and child labor.

Finally, governments must ensure that marginalised and vulnerable groups, including women, and young people, are prepared for the labor market, with market-oriented skills, having decent work, while addressing digital inequality.



What structural obstacles hinder the implementation of this SDG (at local, national, regional, and/or global levels)?

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a devastating impact on workers and their livelihoods, with an estimated 114 million jobs lost globally in 2020, and potentially as many as 400 million. This exacerbates the unemployment situation, particularly for young people and women, and threatens to reverse progress made towards achieving full and productive employment and decent work for all. According to the International Labour Organisation (ILO), employment losses in 2020 were higher for women (5.0%) and for young workers (8.7%) than for men (3.9%).

The COVID-19 pandemic has put the spotlight on the critical importance of unpaid care work - and, in the words of the UN Secretary-General, “the fallacy that unpaid care is not work.” It is time to recognize the essential value of this work and its huge contribution to the wellbeing of people and to the economy. Unpaid care work, however, is also a major source of economic injustice for women of all ages who globally assume three-fourths of this work, impeding their ability to earn an income.

Furthermore, COVID-19 exposed underlying systemic inequalities and fragilities, exacerbating the vulnerabilities of those already at risk of being left behind, including as a result of the



climate and biodiversity emergencies. The pandemic has heightened the risks of exploitation and delayed action to address contemporary forms of slavery, as essential resources have been diverted from implementation measures to support healthcare systems.

As States rebuild their economies, we must ensure a just, green recovery that is people-centered, recognizing the needs of vulnerable and marginalized groups and ensuring that no one is left behind, while simultaneously addressing the climate crisis and restoring nature. Even with COVID-19 under control in many parts of the world and vaccination programmes being rolled out internationally, the global economic recovery will take many years.



What role can civil society play in achieving this SDG?

Civil society can advocate for universal sustainable social protection systems and schemes that reduce inequalities, protect marginalized or vulnerable groups and ensure their meaningful participation and inclusion in the design, implementation, and monitoring of labor laws and policies. It can also amplify the voices of these groups through existing fora, innovative campaigns, and other advocacy initiatives.



How does this SDG support or connect with other goals in the 2030 Agenda? With specific targets of other international frameworks?

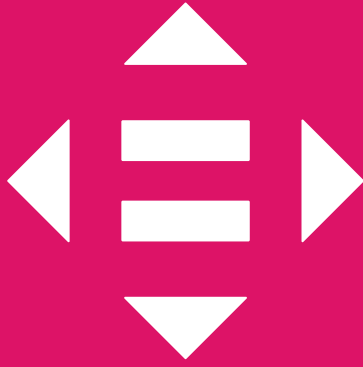
SDG 8 is particularly linked to SDG 5.2 (regarding elimination of violence and sexual exploitation of women and girls), SDG 5.3 (regarding the end of harmful practices such as forced marriage and female genital mutilation), SDG 5.4 (as the inequitable distribution of unpaid care work is a major obstacle to women's labor force participation), 10.2 (regarding the promotion of social, economic and political inclusion of all people), 10.7 (regarding the facilitation of safe, regular and responsible migration), 12.B (regarding tools to monitor sustainable tourism) and 16.2 (regarding the end of abuse, exploitation, trafficking and violence against children and women of all ages).



Are there emerging issues related to this SDG that should be noted?

COVID-19 has altered migration patterns and increased poverty, unemployment, and inequality, placing already vulnerable individuals at higher risk of exploitation. Millions of vulnerable workers lack access to COVID-19 testing, health care, sick leave, or the physical or financial means to self-isolate. In addition, border closures and travel restrictions have left many migrant workers stranded and out of work, unable to support themselves or return home. Lockdown measures have created significant obstacles in identifying victims of contemporary forms of slavery and domestic violence in providing support to survivors, leading to increased isolation and vulnerability to exploitation. Green jobs and integrating climate and nature into finance and policies can support us to build back better through a just, green pandemic recovery.

10 REDUCED INEQUALITIES



REDUCED INEQUALITIES



How should governments implement this SDG and related targets?

Governments and world leaders must make it a collective priority to tackle inequality by “reaching the furthest behind first,” implementing equitable human rights-based and people-centred approaches to eliminating inequalities. Engaging with and empowering local communities, groups, and civil society in planning, managing and implementing policies to reduce the gaps between communities is crucial.

At the heart of this transformation is a need to finance sufficient social protection for those most marginalized in the community and promoting and accommodating their most basic needs, such as their right to quality education, healthcare, water and sanitation, can go effectively boost the inclusion of everyone in society. There has to be a shift from financial capital to social capital- the social capital of communities needs to be incentivized by governments to ensure equitable access to all resources, especially women from underserved communities.



What structural obstacles hinder the implementation of this SDG (at local, national, regional, and/or global levels)?

Inequality matters. It matters for the ostracized and the most difficult-to-reach communities who face social exclusion that prevents them from realizing their human rights. The pandemic has further marginalized vulnerable communities, hitting the poorest and disadvantaged the hardest. In addition to pre-existing inequalities, the dissemination of the COVID-19 vaccine further excludes the poorer and disadvantaged groups. While initiatives like COVAX exist to pre-empt this, the circulation of the vaccine is still relatively prejudiced.

The sole reliance on financial capital has also been a major hurdle in the goal of reducing inequalities.



What role can civil society play in achieving this SDG?

Civil society plays a pivotal role in reversing widening inequality and building a more inclusive and intersectional society through eliminating systemic discrimination and tackling entrenched privilege. We encourage governments and international organizations to implement relevant taxation and progressive spending for quality social protection and universal public services. Civil society can also play an advisory role in recommending the implementation and frequent revision of specific and appropriate minimum living wages along with strengthened workers' rights and the protection of democracy.

The presence of Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) allows for checks and balances in government, ensuring efficient and accurate reporting of progress and the localization of programmes and policies. CSOs also monitor the realities of inequality and bridge the gaps that occur as a consequence of an unfair distribution of resources. The nature of most CSOs is that they operate at grassroot levels and therefore have active and direct engagement



with populations, and are able to aid and maintain contact with hard-to-reach and excluded populations to ensure no one is left behind.



How does this SDG support or connect with other goals in the 2030 Agenda? With specific targets of other international frameworks?

Tackling inequalities provides a holistic solution to achieving other goals in the 2030 Agenda, because inequality is rampant and exists in nearly all aspects of life and society. A plethora of data exists to prove that countries with high income inequality may experience slower economic growth, extended span of recessions and a reduced effectiveness in lifting people out of poverty (SDG1). When particular emphasis is placed on the reduction of inequality between genders (SDG 5), access to health (SDG 3), education (SDG 4), clean water and sanitation (SDG 6), clean and safe energy access (SDG7) it results in an augmented economic green growth (SDG 8) and sustainable cities and communities (SDG 11), and reduces tension in the society, which can contribute to the avoidance of migration and wars. Reversing social exclusion and ensuring no one is left behind creates a more coherent society where every individual works together to achieve a similar goal (SDG17).



Are there emerging issues related to this SDG that should be noted?

The pandemic has thrown into stark relief the high and rising inequality across the globe, widening the already-wide gap between communities. With the economic consequences of COVID-19 being projected as worse than the 1930's Great Depression, it is important to note that there are two sides of the pandemic, and the popular misconception that the pandemic made everyone poorer is false.

The economic and social costs of the pandemic are borne disproportionately by the poorer segments of society while simultaneously proving a boon for the ultra-rich. The staggering rise in the stock-market is testament to this. In the US, over 44 million people lost their jobs and unemployment increased by 15% between April and June 2020, whereas the fortunes of the top five billionaires rose by \$102 billion, increasing their wealth by 26%. India's billionaires saw their wealth increase by 35% during the pandemic whereas 84% of Indian households saw their incomes fall. With adverse social, economic, and political consequences, rising inequality in the distribution of resources available is the biggest cause of a depressed economic growth. It has stoked political polarization, social dissatisfaction, and populist nationalism. As the pandemic has highlighted, it has increased economic and societal fragility to shocks and should another pandemic transpire in the future, humanity is ill-prepared and will plummet into deeper inequality, hurting already vulnerable communities the most.

12 RESPONSIBLE CONSUMPTION AND PRODUCTION



RESPONSIBLE CONSUMPTION AND PRODUCTION



How should governments implement this SDG and related targets?

Governments must prioritize SDG 12 in their national action plans, embedding sustainable consumption and production priorities within all aspects of development, trade, industry, science, environmental stewardship, research, and technology. SDG 12 must also be integrated into sectoral plans and sustainable business practices, supported by educational programs enhancing consumer awareness by providing greater transparency and information on products and services.

Government policies supporting socially and environmentally harmful production and lifestyles must be stopped and reallocated towards incentives for more humane, sustainable and socially-responsible alternatives. Conservation of cultural heritage sites is a good example of a strategy for using and reusing existing resources, contributing to 'zero waste' practices and the shift to a fully circular economy. The continued use, adaptive reuse and maintenance of older buildings should be an essential policy in the construction sector as a means of avoiding and reducing consumption of new building materials.

Governments must also regulate the private sector and enforce the provision of accessible information for consumers on the social, environmental and animal welfare impacts of a product and its packaging throughout its lifecycle. A transformative approach to production-consumption systems requires intensive changes, product line by product line. City, territorial and even national governments are joining academic, civil society, and private sector actors to implement these transformative efforts, ensuring educated consumers and increased brand focus on ethics and sustainability.

Governments should conduct a review of food systems in the context of sustainable production and consumption, human rights, and protection of living species and their natural habitats. Policies must shift from facilitating excessive meat, dairy, and fish production and consumption towards plant-based and cellular alternatives. Policies must also include agro-ecological solutions that are humane, sustainable, and interlinked with the principles of food sovereignty and the right to adequate and nutritious food, as well as support traditional, sustainable systems of agricultural production and indigenous practices that improve livelihoods, reduce soil and groundwater pollution, and protect human health while also sequestering and drawing down as much carbon as possible.

Governments should continue to introduce and implement technical standards, subsidy, taxation and policy schemes, shifting from voluntary to regulatory approaches, to create a fully circular economy in all areas, including recycling of waste (packaging, metal, plastic, batteries, cloth etc) and repairment of equipment (ovens, mobile phones). The standards should force companies to make and market only recyclable, repairable and energy efficient products.

Finally, the pause on tourism imposed by COVID-19 can provide an opportunity for more sustainable tourism options to be designed. Heritage sites and practices that embody sustainable consumption and production patterns, based on an understanding of reasonably using and re-using natural resources and relying on local materials, can form the basis for such a transformation of the tourism sector.



What structural obstacles hinder the implementation of this SDG (at local, national, regional, and/or global levels)?

Transformation toward a sustainable world requires fundamental changes in how our societies produce and consume goods and services. Worldwide, especially in the global North, over-consumption and mass resource waste negatively impact land, wildlife, water, and humanity. Achieving SDG 12 requires increasing political will and consumer education and capacity to tackle unsustainable patterns of production and consumption, which lie at the root of environmental degradation, species extinction, and the violation of fundamental human rights in many communities worldwide.



What role can civil society play in achieving this SDG?

Civil society can play an important role in public awareness-raising about the impact of various production and consumption patterns. It can also monitor the social and environmental costs of various products and policies and inform decision-makers and policymakers.



How does this SDG support or connect with other goals in the 2030 Agenda? With specific targets of other international frameworks?

Failure to curb unsustainable consumption and production patterns will result in the inability to achieve SDG 1, SDG 2, SDG 3, SDG 6, SDG 7, SDG 11, SDG 13, SDG 14, and SDG 15. Progress on SDG 4, SDG 8, and SDG 9 have the potential to support progress toward SDG 12. SDG 12 is also linked to the Food Systems Summit and the Conference of the Parties of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP26) and the Convention on Biological Diversity (COP15) which are taking place this year.



Are there emerging issues related to this SDG that should be noted?

The private sector has a major role to play in achieving SDG 12, including by internalizing externalities and government policies requiring the usage of Extended Producer Responsibilities. However, too often governments and companies fail to follow through on lofty social and environmental commitments, masking the reality of their impacts on people and planet. Voluntary guidelines have failed to hold corporations accountable, and stronger measures are needed. Micro, small and medium scale enterprises (MSMEs) play a major role, as the primary business sectors in cities and territories. As markets of many types connect production to consumption, it is important also to include the concept of “territorial markets” articulated by the Civil Society Mechanism of the Committee on Food Security.

Binding accountability and due diligence mechanisms for transnational corporations is necessary to ensure adherence to strengthened environmental and social standards throughout production and value chains.

13 CLIMATE ACTION



CLIMATE ACTION



How should governments implement this SDG and related targets?

Governments must step up their commitments and actions at all levels and in all sectors to achieve SDG13 and the Paris Agreement, with the goal of limiting global temperature rise to 1.5 degrees celsius. This includes engaging multilateral cooperation and cross-sector collaboration at all levels, prioritizing nature- and ecosystem-based adaptation and mitigation, rapidly transitioning to sustainable, nature-sensitive renewable energy, increasing climate finance commitments, use of debt relief or debt swap schemes, and building capacity for all stakeholders to contribute their experience and knowledge to tackle climate change prevention. It is imperative for all governments to design strategies based on existing science and accept that poverty and conflict is related to climate injustice and hence those communities that are vulnerable are disproportionately being affected due to climate change.

Governments can use fiscal instruments like taxation and subsidies to encourage the production and consumption of more climate-friendly goods and products. This is particularly true for energy (investing massively in renewables, and energy efficiency), food (accelerating the ongoing shift to more plant-based diets) and transportation (developing railway and bicycle infrastructures). Policy coherence is urgently needed. Governments must lead by example through public procurement and sustainable practices. Government must end subsidies and loans to fossil and nuclear energy supply, climate exacerbating agricultural practices and to infrastructure that creates major consumption of fossil fuels.

Food systems must be addressed, enabling a transition back to sustainable models of farming, small-scale, ecologically aligned traditional systems that are more climate friendly.

Nature-positive, locally adapted solutions need to be incentivized to address climate change. 10 percent of all global and national climate finance should be allocated to ecosystem-based restoration and disaster prevention, as well as supporting the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration and post-2020 global biodiversity framework.



What structural obstacles hinder the implementation of this SDG (at local, national, regional, and/or global levels)?

Some of the major obstacles to implementation include short-term interests that prevent long-term investment in climate policy action; the current economic system which is based on the maximization of short-term profit without taking into account externalities or costs that are transferred to the next generation; subsidies to fossil, nuclear and industrial agriculture, funding preferences for centralized solutions instead of decentralized solutions; a lack of institutional support for local and community climate initiatives; continuing the financing of climate exacerbating agricultural industries; lack of community based climate adaptive disaster resilience initiatives; lack of locally owned and micro-credit schemes; non-existent international financial resources to address loss and damage due to climate change; and a lack of regulations to couple with incentives. Additionally, it is important that governments, the UN and other major institutions set an example on climate action, from using renewable energies to serving climate-friendly plant-rich food at their conferences, as a lack of example from such institutions can be seen as a barrier to implementation.



What role can civil society play in achieving this SDG?

Civil society can play a role in bringing about solidarity on climate action through highlighting the interconnectedness of life on the planet. Civil society must use the momentum offered by the different UN summits in the second part of 2021, especially the Food System Summit, CBD COP15 and UNFCCC COP26 to highlight the need for radical transformative actions. Civil society can also promote the behavior change necessary for adaptation and mitigation, drawing on cultural insights and references. Finally, civil society must remain vigilant against greenwashing and “name and shame” destructive actors, while encouraging these actors to transition towards more sustainable products (from electric bicycles to plant based diets).



How does this SDG support or connect with other goals in the 2030 Agenda? With specific targets of other international frameworks?

SDG13 is related to most of the other goals. Failure to achieve SDG 13 exacerbates inequalities and food production. Emissions and pollution, as well as diets high in greenhouse gas emissions, also contribute to poor health outcomes. At the same time, tackling climate change can create new job opportunities (SDG 8), and local energy solutions can improve energy access and sustainability (SDG 7), build resilience and protect livelihoods (SDG1). Climate change harms life on land (SDG 15) and life below water (SDG 14). However, conservation efforts for these goals can contribute to combating climate change.

Education (SDG 4); innovation (SDG 9); policies for inclusion, resource efficiency and disaster risk reduction (SDG 11); and sustainable consumption and production (SDG 12); implementation of the Sendai Framework and access to information (as set out in the Escazu agreement) are needed to tackle SDG 13.



Are there emerging issues related to this SDG that should be noted?

Climate-related migration is a growing, complex, and unpredictable consequence of the climate crisis. Global population continues to grow while liveability in many regions will be decreased by climate change. With respect to human rights, a just transition to support a shift towards climate-friendly and healthy food systems while ensuring job creation and employment is key, as is the linkage between climate change, public health, agriculture, biodiversity and ecosystems through the ‘One Welfare’ approach.

Finally, COVID-19 had an impact not only on our lives, but also SDG13. We saw reduced CO2 emissions in 2020, but this is short-term. When the economy rebounds the emissions and negative impacts of our activities will rise again. Moreover, throughout the COVID-19 crisis, important actions were put on hold, hindering the completion of climate targets and successful progress of international frameworks.

16 PEACE, JUSTICE AND STRONG INSTITUTIONS



PEACE, JUSTICE AND STRONG INSTITUTIONS



How should governments implement this SDG and related targets?

Governments should uphold the rule of law, honor international commitments and ensure freedom of expression, assembly and association. It is critical to adopt and implement national legislation and policies on access to information by providing adequate mechanisms, including training key implementing agencies. This will ensure availability of robust, reliable, and disaggregated data and recognize citizen-generated data to facilitate transparent monitoring and reporting on the Goals. Identifying gaps and barriers to implementation of solutions and trying to not impose a one-size-fits-all solution can help reach targets.

Governments must uphold the absolute prohibition of torture and all forms of ill-treatment as a jus cogens norm of international law as enshrined in the UN Convention Against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (1987) and other international instruments. Further, governments should ensure regular training of law enforcement agencies and related institutions and authorities on international protocols such as the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, to guarantee prompt and effective investigation and prosecution for police violations and misconduct and to break the cycle of systemic impunity.

Persons in confinement should be prioritized for access to vaccination as part of the right to access medical assistance protocols. A range of non-custodial sentencing measures for minor offences should be implemented, and traditional custodial sentences for more serious crimes (i.e. alternative sanctions to imprisonment such as probation, rehabilitation and fines) should be restricted. Finally, there should be a review of COVID-19 response regulations that disproportionately target poor and vulnerable groups.



What structural obstacles hinder the implementation of this SDG (at local, national, regional, and/or global levels)?

COVID-19 highlighted the need to strengthen institutions and build resilient governance systems and economies that can withstand unprecedented challenges in the future. COVID-19 affects public health, but also raises serious human rights and justice concerns around the world, with disproportionate impacts on vulnerable and marginalized groups. The pandemic has witnessed exceptional government responses which, while necessary to curb the spread of the virus, have been used in some cases as a pretext for clamping down on civic space, concentrating power in the executive branches of government, and reducing democratic and judicial oversight of governance functions.

The world continues to witness increasing levels of racism, inequality, discrimination, violence, child trafficking, illegal financial flows, and worsening impacts of climate change. Civic space is rapidly shrinking with crackdowns on peaceful protests; frequent disruptions of digital spaces and internet access; intrusive deployment of surveillance technology; and intimidation and unjust detention of human rights defenders, whistle-blowers, and journalists. We also voice concern regarding reports of disproportionate and arbitrary force against vulnerable populations while enforcing lockdowns and curfews.



The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the need for democratic and human rights-centred approaches to governance at the global level. The response by governments to the pandemic threatens to reverse the progress made in achieving basic fundamental rights and freedoms. A global response to the pandemic shaped by and respecting human rights will result in fairer and more equitable outcomes and build more just and sustainable societies post COVID-19.

What role can civil society play in achieving this SDG?

Civil society can play a critical role in ensuring that recovery from the pandemic is non-discriminatory and inclusive and in line with international, regional and national human rights obligations, ensuring a people-centred approach to meeting the SDGs. They can also scale-up conflict resolution capabilities for community and religious leaders, enabling them to take a more active role in promoting peaceful and inclusive societies. They can also advocate for the integration of peace and global citizenship education in all school curricula. Civil society can demand open government data and freedom of information laws. Finally, they can recommend annual reviews of SDG 16 as part of the current HLPF. SDG 16 is linked with all other SDGs, and peaceful, just, and inclusive societies underpin the entire 2030 Agenda.

How does this SDG support or connect with other goals in the 2030 Agenda? With specific targets of other international frameworks?

While SDG 16 is truly indivisible from the other SDGs, SDG Target 16.3 (regarding promoting the rule of law and equal access to justice for all) SDG 16.6 (regarding effective, accountable and transparent institutions), SDG Target 16.10 (regarding public access to information) and SDG Target 16.B (regarding non-discriminatory laws and policies) are particularly linked to SDG Target 9.C (regarding increasing information and communications technology and universal, affordable internet access) and SDG Target 10.7 (regarding orderly, safe, regular and responsible migration).

Are there emerging issues related to this SDG that should be noted?

During the COVID-19 pandemic, prisons and any place of confinement, including nursing homes and detention centers, remain at risk of outbreaks, with the impossibility of physical distancing and lack of adequate health and hygiene provisions.

Ending communication between persons in confinement and their families has caused mental health and well-being to plummet. This is exacerbated by the societal impacts of increasing poverty, unemployment, and inequality. Internal and external monitoring of prisons must be implemented to ensure that any restrictive measures in prisons adopted in response to the pandemic or otherwise adhere to basic human rights principles. If restrictions are to be imposed, alternatives must be explored. Meanwhile, the digital divide has restricted possibilities for many to engage in civic life online.

17 PARTNERSHIPS FOR THE GOALS



PARTNERSHIPS FOR THE GOALS





How should governments implement this SDG and related targets?

The NGO Major Group recognizes international solidarity and global collaboration as vital for the success of the 2030 Agenda, as envisioned in SDG 17. This includes a stronger commitment towards respecting nature in all aspects of our lives and fostering international, interdisciplinary, intersectoral dialogues and partnerships, crucial to the realization of sustainable development.

There is a critical need to achieve global sustainable development and personal empowerment, while respecting the diverse needs and desires of individuals, and the human rights of all. As noted, cooperation is the only path to success of the 2030 Agenda. Developed countries must fulfil their longstanding and still unmet ODA commitments (0.7% of GDP for contributions) and expand the G20's Debt Service Suspension Initiative (DSSI) in light of the COVID-19 pandemic. Global, equitable funding and support for sustainable development, technical cooperation, and technology transfers will build capacity in Least Developed Countries. Waiving intellectual property rights on COVID-19 vaccines and ensuring equal access to vaccination are key.

Decision-making based on disaggregated scientific data is a critical element in enhancing policy coherence. Making data accessible through equitable and inclusive open access and open science policies is essential. Successful implementation of the SDGs requires monitoring and reporting mechanisms so that sectoral policies and procedures are revised in light of potential negative impacts. Legal systems must be strengthened in order to ensure there is a framework to protect the wellbeing of people, animals and planet, aligned with the 2030 Agenda.

Achieving the SDGs hinges on the leadership of civil servants to operationalize principles of governance and policy commitments. A professional, capable, and responsive public service is key in providing value and increasing citizens' confidence in public institutions. Governments must adjust their administrative practices to cope with complex economic, social and environmental realities, and to improve the use of human resources in the most effective way. Civil servants at all levels and in all organizations need to acquire skills that push them beyond the traditional operating environment and challenge them to think and act in new, interdisciplinary ways, applying new tools to public sector innovation, systems-based thinking, and experimental policy design.



What structural obstacles hinder the implementation of this SDG (at local, national, regional, and/or global levels)?

Interlinked challenges such as COVID-19, climate change, diminished biodiversity, and continuing crises rooted in economic, judicial, and human rights inequalities are the product of a global system which separates humans from nature. States continue to prioritize financial profit over commitment to harmonious development, and invest in fossil fuels; ultra-processed foods and industrial agricultural production; subsidies and tax loopholes which facilitate major corporations at the expense of the majority of the population. This must be curtailed



urgently. Humanity's perception of nature is inevitably cultural, as a result of socioeconomic processes. A transformation in global sustainable development is necessary, and the artificial divide between cultural and natural issues must be bridged with inspiration from pre-modern/traditional social value systems and indigenous people's knowledge and lived experiences.



What role can civil society play in achieving this SDG?

Partnerships depend on a common vision, opportunities, collaboration and resources. It is the responsibility of all partnerships to create understanding and act with transparency and accountability. Partnerships need an enabling environment to form. Governments must foster common platforms, uniting all stakeholders in alignment of interest, collectively developing visions and innovative collaborations. Systematic approaches are necessary to the development of partnering and communicative skills, tailored capacity building, and institutional monitoring frameworks.

Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) are an ally, and play a fundamental role in achieving sustainable development in its three pillars, as a result of a growing and advanced experience; creating mechanisms for communication and cooperation, and collaborating in partnership with other stakeholders at all levels. It is thus essential that governments at all levels greatly increase the amount of funding available to support civil society contributions to implementation and our participation in partnership initiatives.



How does this SDG support or connect with other goals in the 2030 Agenda? With specific targets of other international frameworks?

This is the goal of goals. Without the realization of SDG 17, other goals will fall short. SDG 17 is the source of financing for sustainable development and embodies the principle of cooperation as the driving force for the 2030 Agenda.



Are there emerging issues related to this SDG that should be noted?

States lack commitment to their past pledges. Increasing nationalism, trade tensions, threats to civic space and political instability challenge effective cooperation towards common goals. Unequal access to the internet and monopolization of digital technologies prevents the participation of many in development processes and opportunities.

We recognize the role of heritage sites for rights-based, diversity-conscious, environmentally respectful, and sustainable processes. These represent the adoption and implementation of standards that can be achieved through meaningful engagement, awareness-raising and education. However, current resources are insufficient and we lack international, inter-sectoral and intergenerational partnerships aimed at sustainable practices and capacity building.

Interlinkages and Coherence



While in 2021 the HLPF will discuss nine SDGs in depth, the integrated and interdependent nature of the SDGs is well accepted. An integrated approach requires identifying and maximizing synergies across goals and targets and limiting or managing trade-offs. Positive interactions between the SDGs result in co-benefits and desirable impacts. For example, there are positive co-benefits to tackling climate change and urban air quality. Similarly, improving access to clean water and sanitation reduces child mortality and infectious diseases such as COVID-19. The interdependent nature of the SDGs also requires, however, that progress made in some areas is not made at the expense of progress achieved in other areas (for example, renewable energy development that fails to incorporate adequate environmental and social safeguards), undermining the effectiveness of the SDGs as a cohesive blueprint.

Improving our understanding of the interlinkages between the SDGs is key to helping us achieve the SDGs in the context of the Decade of Action, and to better navigate the economic, social, and environmental dimensions of the 2030 Agenda. This improved understanding is especially needed in light of the COVID-19 pandemic. With profound impacts on health, income, and education, the pandemic has also brought to the forefront the linkages between disease risk, climate change, human rights, and the exploitation of animals and the environment, as well as the benefits of a just 'One Health' approach.

Emerging markets and developing economies will be more severely impacted by the economic effects of the crisis due to their unique vulnerability. They may be more likely to suffer from weak health systems or may depend on sectors (such as trade or tourism) which have been particularly hit by the pandemic. The unprecedented challenges brought on by COVID-19 represent both a wake-up call (highlighting the need for urgent and accelerated action towards achieving the SDGs), and an opportunity which we cannot afford to miss to set a just and sustainable course for people, animals, and the environment.

Relevant high-level and/or intergovernmental meetings and processes must appropriately take into account the interdependent nature of the SDGs. Policy coherence and an integrated, holistic, and inclusive approach are key. For instance, collectively, the three post-2015 agendas for action (Paris Agreement, 2030 Agenda, and Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction), together with the post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework to be agreed later this year, provide the foundation for sustainable, low-carbon and resilient development under a changing climate. This Decade of Action must drive the collective and coordinated implementation of all these global goals in order to deliver an equitable, carbon-neutral, nature-positive future for all. A concerted effort must be made to break thematic silos and foster effective synergies between and across all key processes and agendas (e.g. climate and biodiversity). Where high-level meetings focus on one SDG, every effort should be made to consider and discuss the interlinkages with other goals (e.g. climate action, good health, and universal access to water and sanitation, to name only some cross-cutting challenges, play a key role in many other SDGs).

The NGO Major Stakeholder Group calls upon the UN System and Member States to consider the following recommendations:



The devastating effects of the COVID-19 pandemic have profoundly transformed the global landscape since the adoption by Member States of the 2019 HLPF Political Declaration, deepening the challenges ahead in the context of the Decade of Action, threatening progress achieved, and shining a stark light on the urgent and vital need to accelerate action towards the achievement of the SDGs. Our collective commitment to a sustainable, just, and resilient recovery from COVID-19 must start with an ambitious Ministerial Declaration at this year's HLPF session, rejecting business as usual, committing to accelerated action by highlighting key pathways and levers, and focusing on the SDGs where we are most lagging behind and on the needs of the poorest and most vulnerable. We also call for the Declaration to acknowledge the interlinked nature of the SDGs and to highlight the synergies between the different agendas.



The integrated and interdependent nature of the SDGs calls for bridging silos, policy coherence, inter- and trans-disciplinary approaches, and inclusivity (involving all actors and with a particular focus on the poorest and most vulnerable). This must go hand in hand with a concerted effort to improve our knowledge base on the interlinkages between the SDGs, as this is key to identifying synergies and trade-offs, and to guiding targeted action and funding. In 2021, opportunities for synergistic and accelerated action must in particular be implemented across and within the following processes and meetings : UNFCCC and CBD CoPs ; UN Food Systems Summit ; High-Level Meeting on the water-related goals and targets of the 2030 Agenda ; 2nd UN Ocean Conference; 2nd Global Sustainable Transport Conference; UNESCO World Conference on Education for Sustainable Development; High-level dialogue on Energy; Commission on the Status of Women.



Particularly in light of the deeply disruptive effects of COVID-19, it is critical to increase funding and technical support geared towards improving the ability of countries to implement the holistic, integrated, and cross-sectoral approach that is required to achieve the SDGs and to track progress towards their achievement.

