Position Paper of the Non-Governmental Organizations Major Group
High Level Political Forum 2019

The research evidence and on-the-ground experience of NGOs draws from the interconnectedness of the Sustainable Development Goals and the need for more holistic approaches to achieving them. Repeated challenges noted by NGOs reflect breaches in human rights, exclusion, disempowerment, lack of environmental sustainability, reduction of cultural diversity, over reliance on aggregated data, separation of sectors, unilateralism, and lack of urgency or political will. Where NGOs observed progress, the processes that brought it about, regardless of the SDGs under which it was achieved, had at their core human rights, inclusion, empowerment, cultural and environmental sustainability, disaggregation of data, cooperation and true collaboration and integration across sectors, multilateralism, and not only will or commitment but also action taken *with* all stakeholders and with human rights at the centre.

In the spirit of "empowering people and ensuring inclusiveness and equality," the global community must return to the commitments that are at the base of the 2030 Agenda and ask: has the work toward achievement been done with people at the centre, on the basis of human rights, balancing economic development with environmental protection and with respect for cultural and ecological rights? In addition, are development efforts including and empowering those who are most impacted by that development?

The Sustainable Development Goals under review at the 2019 High Level Political Forum remind all stakeholders of the five key areas highlighted by the drafters of that Agenda: People, Planet, Prosperity, Peace, and Partnerships. On the surface, these areas seem to correspond directly to the targets under review, addressing people in SDG 4, prosperity in SDG 8 and 10, planet in SDG 13, peace in SDG 16 and partnerships in SDG 17. However, closer examination with those on the ground — civil society, NGOs, community members, individuals — reveals that interlinkages across those goals require us to consider the full and interconnected impacts and interdependence at each phase of our work from consultation, to policy, to implementation, to follow-up and review.

Empowerment, inclusion and equality are both the *outcome of* and the *means for* the achievement of education, decent work and economic growth, reduced inequalities, climate action, peace, justice and strong institutions, and true multi-stakeholder partnerships for sustainable development. Member States and the UN System have committed to people-centred, inclusive, and partnered achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals, while NGOs have committed to inclusion of all stakeholders and collaboration with Member States and the UN System. The NGO Major Group continues to call upon governments to ensure that civil society is guaranteed an active, substantive and meaningful role in decision-making, planning, implementation, evaluation, and assessment in order to ensure accountability and to leave no one behind in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals.

Calls to Action

The NGO MG calls on Member States and United Nations Institutions to take the following actions with regards each of these Goals:

Sustainable Development Goal 4

1. Ensure the right to education for all and promote knowledge of the basic human right to education for all learners regardless of their national or migration status, and create and uphold education policies that defend the right to education for the least advantaged;
2. Prioritize funding for education as a lifelong investment in the well-being of all citizens of all ages and for migrants and refugees in host countries, and commit to funding to build more classrooms and to pay teaching salaries that respect the value of the profession;
3. Ensure free, universal, quality and equitable public provision of early childhood, elementary, secondary, tertiary and adult education for all and provide opportunities for lifelong learning;
4. Ensure basic literacy and numeracy for all including older persons and persons with disabilities, and increase access to accelerated learning programs (ALP) at all levels of education; and provide access to information resources in electronic and/or material format through support of school libraries and learning resource centres;
5. Include all stakeholders — teachers, administrators, learners, parents/primary caregivers, education support service professionals, informal educators, and communities — through consultation, planning, and participation in actions that strive towards achieving access to education for all;
6. Recognize the whole person not just the "student" as the learner, and provide the social emotional learning, psychosocial resilience strengthening, Global Citizenship Education, life-skills learning, and relevant contextualized learning that addresses the multiplicity of needs for succeeding as a learner;
7. Contextualize pedagogical and administrative approaches or educational solutions (both low and high tech) to make them relevant and appropriate to the age groups and places where they are applied, and look to those local and overlooked places for innovations in education;
8. Empower local people in remote communities with the education needed in order to teach their own community members; and develop and preserve skills within communities that empower them to lead their own development;
9. Work multilaterally and across sectors to take a truly holistic approach to creating and ensuring safe environments where quality learning takes place;
10. Recognize and learn from the informal as well as cultural settings where learning takes place; make use of the processes that are successful in informal contexts to strengthen formal contexts; partner with the informal sector to help fill the gaps in formal education;
11. Ensure access and remove the barriers to quality education for all learners and especially for women and girls, persons with disabilities, older persons, indigenous peoples, those in remote rural areas or urban settlements, racial, ethnic, religious or caste minorities, the poor, migrants, refugees, displaced persons, and the LGBTQI community;
12. Ensure that all learners may learn and demonstrate their learning in their primary language, including indigenous languages, and recognize and support Indigenous Peoples culture and ways of learning and in the case of migrants ensure that they have support and services to overcome the linguistic barriers;
13. Support formal and informal education programs that reach those furthest behind and evaluate their effectiveness based on their impacts to the poorest or most marginalized community members with attention to age, gender, disability, race/ethnicity, caste, sexual orientation amongst other factors;

14. Ensure and enforce non-discriminatory and inclusive school environments, policies and practices;
15. Require positive steps towards significantly improving academic persistence, proficiency, and completion, especially among vulnerable communities including but not limited to girls, LGBTQI persons, persons with disabilities, LGBTQI persons, those living in rural remote areas or urban settlements, indigenous people, racial, ethnic, religious or caste minorities, migrants, refugees, and displaced persons;
16. Raise capacity for all teachers — those with degrees and those without, those who teach in classrooms and those who teach in libraries, under trees, at dining room tables, and out on the trails of our natural world; and provide professional development and teaching training to the numerous untrained and uncertificated teachers who already are leading classrooms; and offering professional development opportunities in
    a. Education in Emergencies (EiE) for contexts of disaster, conflict, or protracted crises;
    b. Inclusive education for persons with disabilities;
    c. Social-emotional learning, psychosocial skills and cultural diversity;
    d. Education for Sustainable Development and delivery of education in wider environmental sustainability, including climate change and nature conservation;
    e. Adult learning;
17. Work multilaterally and across sectors to remove the barriers to education and to improve access to clean water, sanitation, efficient electricity, sufficient and nutritious food, security, and opportunity;
18. Uphold and *enforce* the agreed to framework for action set forth in the Safe Schools Declaration and meet the expectations set out in the Education 2030 Framework for Action and Recommendation on Adult Learning and Education (RALE);
19. Review and revise indicators to assess learning more holistically and contextually, through disaggregated data stemming from both quantitative and qualitative instruments, and respecting differences in ways of learning while measuring improvements, setbacks, and gaps that can inform practice.

Sustainable Development Goal 8
1. Place human rights and self-determination of communities at the core of economic development, including tourism development, ensuring meaningful participation and consultation and prior and informed consent on whether, to what extent and in what form tourism takes place;
2. Implement a human rights based approach to decent work and economic growth that includes the rights to decent work for marginalized people, ensuring the disaggregated inclusion of the economic status of women, children, youth, older persons, persons with disabilities, indigenous peoples, racial, ethnic, religious or caste minorities, those in remote rural areas or urban settlements, LGBTQI, migrants, refugees, and displaced persons;
3. Recognize and protect part-time labour forces especially young people and women with policies that ensure decent working conditions;
4. Eliminate indecent, harmful and forced labour including debt bondage, human trafficking and other forms of modern slavery;
5. Enforce the laws against child-labour that were recognized in the *Buenos Aires Declaration*;

6. Address the gender pay gap across sectors and the unequal distribution of unpaid family care work through the provision of family and work reconciliation policies, including paid maternity, paternity and parental leave, as well as the right to request flexible working conditions;

7. Work across sectors and multilaterally to provide relevant formal and informal education and training that leads to decent and sustainable employment;

8. Improve access to clean, sustainable energy and to technology as a foundation for and a part of sustainable economic development;

9. Ensure the right to decent employment, including off-farm income, for small farmers, fisherfolks and pastoral nomads, and implement the U.N. Declaration of the Rights of Peasants and other people living in rural areas;

10. Enact and enforce national and global anti-age discrimination legislation;

11. Review and revise current indicators of national growth to reflect and include the more individuated realities of marginalized people, and in particular ensure the disaggregated inclusion of the economic status of women, girls, children, youth, older persons, indigenous peoples, those in remote rural areas, those engaged in informal employment in urban areas, marginalized communities, LGBTQI, racial, ethnic, religious or caste minorities, migrants, refugees, and displaced persons;

12. Review and revise current targets and indicators to provide direct measures of environmental impacts and impacts on cultures and communities that occur as a result of growth, and take action based on that evidence to mitigate further negative impacts, employing nature-based capital solutions, cultural wisdom, and community centred approaches;

13. Add indicators of well-being as a measurement of progress in development;

14. Apply the Resolution adopted by the 19th International Conference of Labour Statisticians (October 2013) concerning statistics of work, employment and labour underutilization, and including unpaid family care work in work statistics impacting policy and actions;

15. Open access to financing and micro-financing to those who need it most, and provide guidance and education for how to manage that financing;

16. Ensure that the application of target 8.1 remains restricted to LDCs, and that developed countries take steps to reduce or decouple their growth rate, to reduce their ecological footprint, and to bring it to sustainable levels.

Sustainable Development Goal 10

1. Ensure policies that enable all people of all ages to enjoy their human rights to food, decent work, water and sanitation, education, healthcare and housing, culture, free from direct or indirect discrimination;

2. Reverse austerity policies and adopt a comprehensive, interlinked approach that prioritizes public financing of universal service provision. This includes
   a. Progressive fiscal policy reform which prioritizes redistribution and dedicating the "maximum available resources" to the realization of human rights
   b. Create fair and equitable taxation policies, and combating tax avoidance and evasion
   c. Prioritizing truly universal health coverage, including the elimination of user fees, and implementing WHO recommendations and UN GA resolutions;
   d. Addressing disparities in access to water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) services

3. Uphold participatory policy- and decision-making, partnering grassroots communities, through social solidarity economy, especially excluded, marginalized, or underprivileged groups;
4. Confront and eliminate corruption, lack of transparency, and influence or power-based decision-making, funding, implementation, and assessment;
5. Address inequalities between countries through:
    a. Regular review of trade, finance and investment rules and laws on food speculation to avoid abusive practices; tighter global restrictions on speculative trading; and a global monitoring taskforce on food prices;
    b. Urgent and comprehensive quota reform in the IMF and other relevant international bodies, guided by target 10.6 to ensure equal representation for developing countries;
6. Ensure equitable and inclusive financing for the SDGs, through international public financing, restructuring the GDP-based global economic growth model and creating an enabling environment which allows low and middle-income countries the policy and fiscal space to raise and spend sufficient domestic revenue to fund essential services.
7. Put in place comprehensive social protection systems and floors, enforce living wage for all workers, stop labour abuses and protect the rights of workers to organize
8. Put in place anti-discriminatory legislation to address prejudice, discrimination and social exclusion of all forms including based on socio-economic status, gender, race/ethnicity, age, religious or tribal status, caste, and disability, among others;
9. Commit to and enforce migration policies that reduce inequalities for migrants, refugees, and displaced persons and uphold their human rights identity, and dignity:
10. Lift discriminatory visa bans and unfair visa restrictions
11. Protect and assist all migrants in vulnerable situations across the migration cycle, especially women and children, by
    a. Creating safe, regular and affordable pathways and opportunities for human mobility that comply with human rights;
    b. Ending the criminalization and detention of refugees and migrants, and ensuring the right to freedom from expulsion or forced return;
12. Counter xenophobia and foster social inclusion to promote harmonious and peaceful societies, including by
    a. Supporting national and local programs of non-discrimination and social inclusion;
    b. Separating public services from immigration enforcement.
    c. Promoting intercultural dialogue and programs that celebrate and showcase diverse cultures, heritage, and communities;
13. Ensure the transmission and transfer of the cultural heritage of displaced people and communities as a source of identity, dignity and social resilience
14. Adopt the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration and consider the policies and practices recommended by the NGO Committee on Migration.
15. Ensure and protect through law social, economic, and political participation of civil society in the decision making, implementation, monitoring, review and follow up of SDGs.

Sustainable Development Goal 13
1. Align actions with the Paris Agreement, and jointly coordinate local, national, regional policies, ensuring that action on climate adaptation and mitigation, including nature-based solutions and

the expansion of sustainable renewable energy, is taken at all levels and integrated into Nationally Determined Contributions;

2. Place structural, environmental, psychosocial and cultural resilience at the heart of planning, implementing, monitoring and sustaining services, procedures and systems that address climate change effects;

3. Recognize traditional ecological knowledge systems to be part of all local, national, regional and international approaches to combat climate change and to strengthen resilience;

4. Include all members of society in decision-making and implementation processes ensuring no one is left behind;

5. Provide access at all levels to scientifically recognized information about climate change, and how this links to wider environmental sustainability and nature conservation;

6. Disaggregate data and ensure inclusion through data analysis of impacts to all people, including indigenous people, women and girls, racial/ethnic minorities, youth and older persons, those in remote rural areas, migrants, refugees, displaced persons, and persons with disabilities;

7. Report on the total financial losses for each climate-related disaster, disaggregated to reflect impacts to vulnerable populations;

8. Increase donor funding for developing sustainable local/territorial/regional food systems in LDCs and SIDS to reduce disaster risks and to strengthen resilience;

9. Adopt a holistic and inclusive approach to climate-related awareness raising and action through formal and informal education, and expand the means of messaging to include traditional and non-traditional forms of communication (e.g., song, dance, art, storytelling, skill-building, service projects, action research, and appreciation of culture, heritage resources, and cultural histories, and a respect for nature and ecosystem services);

10. Use climate-related awareness programs, and capacity-building programs to build structural, environmental, psychosocial, and socio-economic resilience locally, nationally and regionally; and build capacity within communities to increase climate-related knowledge and modalities of action;

11. Build capacity in ways that engage the social and cultural dimensions of climate change, facilitate knowledge transfer, including South-to-South cooperation, and indigenous and intergenerational ways of transmission;

12. Analyse and make visible the impacts of climate change and climate related disasters on women, and girls and include them meaningful ways in decision-making and actions;

13. Promote local initiatives of Climate Change Resilience;

14. Invest in cultural heritage as a source of social cohesion that enables communities to undertake climate action, emphasizing the power of place, past, and narrative to spark creativity in communicating climate change;

15. Establish in accordance with UNFCCC article 4.3 a clear definition of what constitutes finance for emissions reduction and climate action, and meet commitments for financing;

16. Improve financial transparency to clearly show the sources of climate finance, and allocations; and include in the transparency framework clear modalities, procedures, and guidelines on the financial support provided to developing countries that draw on a clear definition of modalities and accounting of financial support;

17. Work with all multi-stakeholders, including Member States, UN agencies, including UNISDR, academia and NGOs/CSOs involved in climate change adaptation and mitigation, disaster risk

reduction, and recovery; and firmly commit to the agreements and action steps in the Sendai Framework.

Sustainable Development Goal 16

1. Ensure respect for fundamental freedoms, including association, expression, and assembly, which are required for a free and vibrant civil society;
2. Integrate rule of law, violence prevention, and governance-oriented approaches throughout sustainable development efforts and priorities;
3. Uphold the independence and integrity of justice systems and the legal profession, which are essential for upholding and maintaining the rule of law, public confidence in strong institutions, the fair and effective enforcement of laws, and the fair administration of justice without discrimination;
4. Expand public understanding of and respect for the rule of law, and promote the right to access information, public awareness campaigns, civil society's role in ensuring government accountability, and independent and pluralist media;
5. Ensure meaningful access to justice systems at every level, recognizing that additional actions are needed to create enabling environments for marginalized populations — women and girls, children/youth, LGBTQI persons, persons with disabilities, racial/ethnic, religious and caste minorities, indigenous people, migrants, refugees, and displaced persons — and to ensure and empower their full and equal access to justice mechanisms, including legal aid, legal protections to prevent discrimination, inclusive participatory processes within justice system, remedies, and victims' services;
6. Continue to support and accelerate efforts to identify, measure, monitor, and report on indicators, including supplementary and complementary indicators, for SDG 16;
7. Support through policy and financial resources intergroup conflict resolution, informal justice mechanisms, and reconciliation mechanisms in accordance with law;
8. Ensure proper legal and official recognition for people from vulnerable communities like stateless people, caste-based discriminated communities, refugees, and others to ensure access to services and justice for these communities;
9. Promote peace, rule of law, justice, and inclusiveness in all aspects of international development, including through international cooperation and support for inclusive, meaningful, and integrated consultative processes for policy planning, decision making, and implementation at all levels;
10. Develop accountability mechanisms at the national level to address human rights complaints and cases.

Sustainable Development Goal 17

1. Include in meaningful and actionable ways the voice and committed actions of civil society in the process of designing and effectively implementing the 2030 Agenda and associated agreements;
2. Meet commitments to financing, expediting funding already promised to LDCs, and prioritizing actions that advance peace and sustainable development;
3. Support partnerships that are inclusive of civil society, address local as well as global needs, and harness the strength of bringing together experts from multiple sectors to find innovative solutions collaboratively with governments and all other stakeholders;

4. Regulate the influence of private sector donors in order to make needs-based rather than interest-based decisions, and to set more just priorities;
5. Use technology to reach the furthest behind, and finance technology that supports sustainable development to expand financial inclusion and support of civil society lead initiatives;
6. Use technology innovatively to meet the repeated call for disaggregation of data and the analysis of correlating factors such as SDG interlinkages including synergies and trade-offs that impact the achievement of the 2030 Agenda through stronger monitoring efficiency;
7. Strengthen standards for monitoring, evaluation, transparency and accountability of all sectors, particularly through regulation of the private and public industrious sectors with high risk and negative externality levels, including the financial markets through capital control instruments;
8. Transform decision-making and implementation processes through meaningful inclusion of consultation with all stakeholders;
9. Partner with civil society in multilateral, multidimensional and intersectoral collaborations that aim at reaching those furthest behind, empowering people, and ensuring equality in achieving the 2030 Agenda.

Interlinkages across the Sustainable Development Goals
1. Scale-up and speed up implementation of an integrated approach, using international agreements such as the Paris Agreement, Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction, the UN Strategic Plan on Biodiversity 2011-2020 and the Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework, Financing for Development, The New Urban Agenda, the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration, the Global Compact on Refugees, the UNESCO Historic Urban Landscape Recommendation, and other human rights instruments within the 2030 Agenda;
2. Support innovative as well as evidence-based NGO, municipal, and corporate projects that are showcasing creative ways to integrate the SDGs at the local level;
3. Create stronger vertical integration and partnerships to ensure policy coherence and financial flows linking local communities, towns, cities, national government to international sources of funding;
4. Prioritize and invest in inclusive programs that promote a culture of peace, social cohesion, global citizenship principles, environmental sustainability, empowerment, transparency, social equity, justice reform, conflict resolution, and education from various disciplines, as well as education about and awareness of the SDGs with opportunities to connect partners and amplify impacts in part through stronger vertical integration and partnerships, to ensure policy coherence and financial flows linking local communities, towns, cities, national government to international sources of funding;
5. Combat corruption and implement fully international agreements, including human rights agreements that guarantee freedom of assembly and protection of freedom of speech in academia and independent media;
6. Increase investments in evidence-gathering, research and data concerning the most strategic, cost-effective interventions and entry points that create synergies between multiple SDGs;
7. Disaggregate data to capture the realities of marginalised groups — women and girls, persons with disabilities, racial/ethnic or religious minorities, indigenous peoples, those in rural remote areas or urban settlements, people discriminated by caste, LGBTQI, refugees, migrants, displaced

persons, children/youth, and older persons — and correlate evidence to better understand the relationship of compounding factors beyond the scope of one single SDG;

8. Ensure that participatory research methods and citizen data informs policies and programs and that local knowledge and cultural values contributes to a firm foundation to build creative and sustainable new solutions;

9. Create systematic reporting mechanisms that address trade-offs and synergies across all SDGs, and establish measures to minimize any negative impacts.

Discussion: Challenges and Progress in Achieving the Sustainable Development Goals[1]

Sustainable Development Goal 4
Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all

Free, high-quality lifelong learning for all is a right acknowledged in international law and essential to breaking the poverty cycle, supporting environmental sustainability and changing people's lives. However, not *all* people have access to quality education that is meaningful in their contexts and prepares them *throughout* their lifespan for the future, as per the aims of SDG 4. The challenges to access to quality education are not only within the education sector, but instead span across the SDGs and are related to basic gaps in human needs, human rights, and environmental well-being. Therefore, a holistic approach to formal and informal education that addresses social-emotional learning, global citizenship, and caring stewardship of the environment, and inclusion, is needed not only to address education deficits, but to ensure that no one is left behind and each citizen is empowered and given the opportunity to thrive and contribute to the betterment of their communities.

Multi-stakeholder cooperation between communities, NGOs, civil society organisations (CSOs), Faith Based Organizations (FBOs), governments, academia and private enterprises are essential to overcoming barriers to challenges for SDG 4. Government's need to commit to public delivery of equitable, quality free primary *and* secondary education as well as to learning opportunities in later years, and to commit to working in multi-stakeholder partnerships which include government departments, NGOs, FBOs, CSOs, academia, educators, parents and families, and, when appropriate, private enterprises in order for children and their communities to access full education, including early childhood development (ECD) and adult education.

Target 4.1 ensure that all girls and boys complete free, equitable and quality primary and secondary education leading to relevant and effective learning outcomes
As an urgent priority, Member States must financially invest in pre-primary, primary and secondary education, and improve access to tertiary and adult education. Free, quality, lifelong education is crucial for breaking cycles of poverty and transforming societies. Additionally, all children and adults, including migrants, refugees, the internally displaced, asylum seekers or unaccompanied minors have a human right to education at all stages of life. Lifelong learning ensures that all persons, including those of older ages, have the skills to participate fully in economically productive activities and in political and cultural

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[1] Note: Descriptions of NGO work that supports the calls for action can be found at http://bit.ly/ngomg2019hlpf

affairs. However, attainment of education cannot be tackled in isolation of other societal challenges but must be considered holistically.

A holistic approach to education begins with the disaggregation of the data used to assess current conditions and impacts, and with which funding decisions and plans for improvement are made. Aggregation of data hinders policymaking and program-planning efforts and misinforms investments at all levels of education from early childhood education (ECD), to university or vocational education, to continuing adult education, and for the informal educational programs that support learning throughout the lifespan.

Investments in education must include investments in teachers, paying them adequate salaries and training them to teach their chosen subjects well. This investment ensures teacher motivation and improves their ability to help students learn. Professional development should provide pathways for non-certificated teachers to gain the skills needed to be certificated and for all teachers to continue to exercise their full capacity to creatively employ culturally sensitive socio-emotional learning as well as effective methods of active, contextualized, and student and community centred learning. While the benefits of valuing teachers, educators, and education support professionals and professionalizing their roles is easily paired with effective quality education, it is also important to note the value of professional development to the teachers, especially those who serve the communities from which they came.

A school is more than a building — it is a learning environment. It is imperative that schools are safe, protect students and teachers during times of armed conflict and are equipped for learning, including having adequate materials such as textbooks, libraries and computers; adequate infrastructure including furniture, sustainable electricity supplies, lighting, adequate toilets, and access to clean water; and the provision of a nutritious meal to fuel their learning. Classrooms should not be overcrowded, but instead, sized appropriately by age and space and designed to ensure inclusion of children with disabilities. These environments for learning need to be available to all — a goal that demands construction of schools and provision of learning safe learning environments, by and with the communities they serve, in the most remote rural areas, in migrant, refugee, and displaced communities, and in forgotten underprivileged urban areas.

Where private education exists, it is often only accessible to the privileged, and yet in some countries, education has been almost entirely privatized thereby limiting educational opportunities to those who can afford to pay. Consequently, in many countries, NGOs continue to provide educational institutions free of costs, as well as the essential services to ensure that children are able to attend school, such as free school meals, uniforms to families that cannot afford them. Governments must serve as principal providers of education as part of their human rights obligations and simultaneously act as regulators of non-state provision to ensure all educational institutions adhere to the highest standards of quality and equity.

Recognizing the whole person, not just the "student", requires providing social emotional learning, resiliency strengthening, global citizenship education, life-skills learning, and relevant contextualized learning that addresses the multiplicity of needs for thriving.

Target 4.2 ensure that all girls and boys have access to quality early childhood development, care and pre-primary education so that they are ready for primary education
Access and support for Early Childhood Development (ECD) is not prioritised amongst government policies; subsequently, the provision of ECD often depends on the efforts of parents and/or their community. ECD is interlinked with education of the parents and requires a holistic solution, viewing the child within their family's context and environment. A baby's earliest experiences shape brain development, and have a lifelong impact on their mental and emotional health, as well as their physical, intellectual and social development. Investing in maternal health and early childhood development and targeting the most disadvantaged families could have an impact on the future prosperity and stability of a country. Children that engage with ECD and pre-primary education grow up healthier for society; therefore, it is imperative that if Member States are committed to end the poverty cycle, they should invest in ECD, providing funding for facilities and materials for early childhood care and education.

Target 4.3 ensure equal access for all women and men to affordable and quality technical, vocational and tertiary education, including university
Across the globe there is a prevailing mindset that university is the only guaranteed way to gain employment, and those students or learners that choose to not attend or are not afforded the opportunity to attend university are somehow unsuited for advanced higher education. This prejudice against vocational education accompanied by an absence of clear trajectories for lifelong learning has far reaching consequences, including discriminating against people with vocation certificates in favour of those with university degrees for employment.

Access to university remains out of reach to thousands that would like to attend because of the high cost of university tuition. Scholarships to attend universities should be increased, publicly provided tertiary education strengthened, and more guidance on accessing scholarships should be made available to all potential students.

Target 4.4 substantially increase the number of youth and adults who have relevant skills, including technical and vocational skills, for employment, decent jobs and entrepreneurship
There are substantial challenges to ensuring that youth and adults have relevant skills for employment, as there is little investment in vocational, tertiary and lifelong learning. In many countries there is a prejudice against vocational education as being reserved for learners that are considered unworthy for university. Increasing technical or vocational skills must also rely on the ability to read and the ability to apply math, and thus must be pursued in connection to literacy and numeracy targets.

Some religious beliefs and cultural perceptions of gender identities about the role of women in society prevent women from pursuing skills that can lead to entrepreneurship opportunities. These perceptions need to be challenged to ensure that women are supported to pursue entrepreneurship careers. This can be facilitated by increasing the number of opportunities for small businesses, microcredits and collective organizations for women to join, especially critical for migrant women.

While technology offers many solutions for the challenges of education and lifelong learning and the potential for more, these solutions are not accessible to all, with additional impacts for migrants and refugees. In rural or remote areas, or least developed countries where electricity and infrastructure are

lacking, an online format cannot be utilized. And yet, it is within these countries where innovative ways to bring education to *all* are most needed. Therefore, urgent action must be taken across varying sectors to connect these communities to education and to their global society through access to technology, in order to raise aspirations and imagination, and to provide gateways into lifelong learning and employment

Target 4.5 eliminate gender disparities in education and ensure equal access to all levels of education and vocational training for the vulnerable, including persons with disabilities, indigenous peoples and children in vulnerable situations
Despite efforts being made, girls and women continue to be denied access to education in many parts of the world. The factors that keep girls out of school are varied — discrimination, religious traditions, poverty, child marriage, displacement, and even something as natural and intrinsic to being a woman as her monthly period.

It is not only girls and women that experience barriers to accessing education, but also persons with disabilities. We need to ensure that our schools, primary, secondary and higher education facilities, curricula and teachers are equipped to create and foster inclusive learning environments.

There is a division and unequal distribution of resources between urban and rural populations often leaving the rural populations unfunded and unable to access the same quality of education as their urban peers. Investment in rural communities is necessary to ensure that no one is left behind and unable to obtain a quality education.

There is a lack of recognition of indigenous knowledge and skills; including indigenous knowledge in curricula can lead to richer and more inclusive learning experience, while also contributing to sustainable development of economic sectors such as tourism, creative and cultural industries. Furthermore, many indigenous learners enter education systems that do not recognize or allow them to learn in their primary language. Educational institutions should recognize Indigenous cultures, languages, and the Indigenous lands on which these institutions stand.

To achieve gender equality and to ensure access to education for all, Member States must enact and enforce legislation that creates inclusive learning environments that do not discriminate against girls, women, LGBTQI self-identified, disabled people, indigenous people, adult learners, religion and cultural beliefs.

Target 4.6 ensure that all youth and a substantial proportion of adults, both men and women, achieve literacy and numeracy
Worldwide, an estimated 781 million people aged 15 and over remain illiterate and nearly two thirds of them are women[2]. Adult education is crucial to achieving SDG 4 and the SDG's vision, as signified by UNESCO's 2015 Recommendation on Adult Learning. Children who have parents who are illiterate are more likely to be illiterate themselves. Giving adults the opportunity to learn and to grow their skills not

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[2] United Nations Statistics Division (2015). The World's Women 2015 Trends and Statistics. Chapter 3 – Education. https://unstats.un.org/unsd/gender/chapter3/chapter3.html

only improves chances for children but provides opportunities for the parents themselves to improve their own skills changing from economic stagnation to a more secure livelihood and the chance to break the poverty cycle, for their immediate and future families.

There are many positive examples that NGOs have initiated or observed around the world. In order for these to become the norm rather than the exception, governments need to substantially increase their investment in education to provide free early childhood, primary, secondary and adult education and opportunities for lifelong learning for all. This investment must also include providing books and learning materials that are relevant to communities, and as well as investment in communities connecting literacy skills to improvements in health and livelihood sustainability.

Target 4.7 ensure that all learners acquire the knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development, including, among others, through education for sustainable development and sustainable lifestyles, human rights, gender equality, promotion of a culture of peace and non-violence, global citizenship and appreciation of cultural diversity and of culture's contribution to sustainable development

Each of these value-based educational aims listed in SDG target 4.7 are essential for achieving all 17 SDGs; however, there is a significant lack of understanding about the holistic perspective of what they can add to a formal education. Compounding this is a lack of financial and societal investment in these value-based education aims. Consequently, a substantial amount of education for sustainable development, Global Citizenship Education and other values-driven education happens in informal learning environments, such as youth education, community education and active citizenship education, empowering citizens of all ages and all communities to see themselves as key actors in contributing to a more sustainable world.

Target 4.7 as it is, only measures global citizenship education (GCE) as it is practiced within the school curriculum. However, GCE incorporates learning that is lifelong and occurs both inside and outside of the school curriculum. The indicators proposed do not address the situations where GCE is practiced by civil society organisations and families outside formal settings. This creates a major obstacle for countries that do not have a way of measuring non formal and informal learning outside of the school curriculum and for adults. This challenge proves a major setback for target 4.7. as it does not enable the creation of mechanisms for showing the work being done by civil society in GCE and thereby diminishes its effect on achieving SDG 4.

Target 4.A Build and upgrade education facilities that are child, disability and gender sensitive and provide safe, non-violent, inclusive and effective learning environments for all

We must ensure that all places of learning create and foster inclusive learning environments. One step in this aim requires taking a hard look at the accessibility of existing infrastructure. Many schools, colleges and universities are not built for all people, particularly disabled people, thus creating a barrier to education. Compounding the difficulty of access within an institution of learning is the challenge of access to the location of the place of learning. For children and youth in remote rural areas, and especially those with disabilities, the distance of a school from their home and lack of transportation to traverse that span can be a barrier to learning. In regions where there is conflict, travel to school can make a student, especially girls; more vulnerable to violence and even poses a risk to their lives. A further need in

ensuring safe and inclusive environments for learning is addressing prejudice, discrimination and bullying in schools.

Girls and women in many communities face a barrier to education when they have their monthly menstruation. Cultural norms that stigmatize periods, as well as poverty that makes it impossible for a girl to have sanitary products, or schools that lack water and sanitation often force girls to miss several days of school during their bleeding cycles.

Target 4.B substantially expand globally the number of scholarships available to developing countries, in particular least developed countries, small island developing States and African countries, for enrolment in higher education, including vocational training and information and communications technology, technical, engineering and scientific programs, in developed countries and other developing countries

Access to university remains out of reach to thousands that would like to attend but cannot afford the costs of higher education. Scholarships to attend universities should be increased and more guidance on accessing scholarships should be made available to all potential students. Universities in developed countries should reserve places and scholarships for students from "Least Developed Countries", and these scholarships should be based on the merit and potential of the student. Provision of vocational education also needs to be a part of national plans in order to provide pathways to professions and trades that support the sustainable development of a country.

Sustainable Development Goal 8
Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all

The vision of the Sustainable Development Goals included among its aims, sustainable and steady economic growth in both developing and developed economies, while ensuring decent work and wages for all and without adversely affecting the health of our environment. While NGOs continue to strive to support and empower local communities to develop from within, and to empower workers, members of the NGO community continues to face increasing challenges of uneven growth between and within nations, struggle with the impacts of policies that omit many people from a growth plan, and fail to protect the environment. What is needed is a more holistic picture of economic realities and more inclusive plans of action that will take into account the complexity of achieving inclusive and sustainable economic development while at the same time ensuring dignified work for all.

Challenges
GDP as a Measure for Economic Progress
GDP is a measure of total end user consumption, a measure of what people buy, but does not provide a complete picture of human progress. GDP fails to count the contributions of the 60 per cent of the world's employed population that earns their livelihood in the informal economy in urban and rural areas or the contributions to a country's economic stability that is provided through the unpaid work of caring for others. Furthermore, GDP fails to measure the cost paid for that growth by impacts to environments, cultures, or communities — indeed, classical GDP itself may be unsustainable. The 7 per cent annual

GDP growth rate that is specified for Least Developed Countries in Target 8.1 may be beyond reach by 2030 or may not take into account areas of economic development needed for particular contexts. Economic conditions and the infrastructure that is at the base of improving those economic conditions differ from nation to nation as does the data that defines those conditions. NGOs are keenly aware that national growth may not always ensure individual stability. Therefore, standards that examine the impacts are vital to understanding whether or to what extent populations and regions are experiencing the positive effects of growth and whether or to what extent economic growth per se is the most important factor for a specific group or country.

Growth within an individual country can have differing meanings from context to context. The lack of disaggregation for differing contexts within a GDP indicator —for example, rural/remote communities, women and girls, youth, older persons, indigenous peoples, LGBTQI, people discriminated against by caste, persons with disabilities — results in greater challenges to bringing about equitable and sustainable economic development for all members of one nation. This disaggregation appears in the targets aimed at employment, but they also need to be considered when viewing the overall growth of any one country.

Inequitable Economic Opportunity
Economic stratification and the impacts of such are not only observed in Least Developed Countries. NGOs note that the differing economic states of being within a developed Member State also need to be addressed.

Economic empowerment through decent work is a crucial aspect of empowering those who for too often have been discriminated against or marginalized by traditional and outdated workforce systems, including persons with disabilities, older persons, indigenous people, those living in rural and remote areas, religious or ethnic minorities, and women. Strengthening the economic role of women, especially those living in marginalised and poor communities, is critical to reduce poverty, improve health and education outcomes, and achieve other broad development goals. However, infrastructure support is needed to enable grassroots women to fully participate and contribute to the economy. Older persons equal participation in the labour market is challenged by additional caregiver responsibilities as well as aged-based discrimination. A recent ODI study revealed the significant gender inequalities between paid work and unpaid and domestic work of older women and men, with women spending more time in unpaid work even when they also maintained paid employment. This resulted in negative impacts on their health and wellbeing[3]. Age-based discrimination affects workers along multiple dimensions, including recruitment, workplace culture, and employment regulations. Therefore, policies to protect the right to work under equal conditions, and to acknowledge and reconcile the tension between work and family duties are indispensable to advance age and gender equality in the labour market and within the family.

Improving employment opportunities calls for a clear strategy in its own right. This includes, but is not limited to, enhanced investment in labour intensive sectors, small and medium industries and generation of local jobs (as contrasted with investment in infrastructure intensive sectors), support for small-holder farmers and small-scale processing industries, enhanced implementation of labour standards (including social protection provision and but going beyond payment of living wages), provisions pertaining to

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[3] United Nations General Assembly, *Report of the Secretary-General on Follow-up to the Second World Assembly on Ageing*, 24 July 2016 (A/68/180).

collective bargaining and social dialogue with a view of improving the quality of jobs available, developing and enforcing legislative frameworks prohibiting child labour of all forms, provisions for training and retraining of workforces, and both monitoring and enforcing these provisions.

The Lack of Economic Decoupling
"Sustainable development" is intended to combine environmentally responsive local development with global growth relieved of its global impacts, called "decoupling." The accumulation of local efficiencies and innovative sustainable designs has indeed delivered important results but has not succeeded in counteracting the environmental impacts of increasing scale of the economy, failing to make a proper foundation for a sustainability. For example, for Target 8.9 it was observed that growth of the tourism industry is measured without regard to its cumulative impacts on local or marginalized communities and environment.

To understand the global problem, one needs to measure the impacts increasing. Global impact indicators 8.4.1 and 8.4.2 represent environmental impacts as ratios of economic goods to economic wealth, and should rather measure real impacts like the concentration of CO_2 in the atmosphere (Scripps Data: https://bit.ly/2o1tiAx, as a figure: https://bit.ly/2VZGq9r). The concentration of CO_2 in the atmosphere is approximately proportional to the real rate of increasing earth temperature, and as is shown in the data, is rapidly accelerating. The actual compound growth rate has increased with the Post WWII reorganization of the global economy, what we call "globalization." The prior rate was 1.48 %/yr which has now risen to 1.9 %/yr today, quite the opposite of the intended effect of 40 years of sustainability efforts. This is just one of many ways in which the scale of economic impacts grows with the economy, not negated by the wealth but instead generated by the wealth.

Real solutions all appear to require finite plans for growth, like normal family businesses and many sustainability plans that grow only to a scale comfortable to manage and serve the goals. To create a proper global foundation for sustainability, we need to ask: What is the goal of our global family business? Finite business models to explore are quite varied, both of successful natural and human design. For business and finance, new kinds of sustainability accounting, fiduciary principles, and response to nature points of diminishing returns are needed. Making a foundation for sustainability would take the effort of all nations, communities, organizations and peoples, and give us a chance to turn humanity's greatest crisis into an opportunity for finding a new way of thinking.

Progress
Many practices are helping to move forward progress on SDG 8 using the empowerment of local communities to balance economic development with human rights and with environmental protections to address climate change. The use of technology should be a tool to serve farmers rather than to replace farmers, and the empowerment of coops and community-led economic initiatives. Progress is also being made in the removal of subsidies for harmful industrial agricultural systems, increased incentives for smallholders, and training for smallholders to practice regenerative and agroecological methods of farming.

An approach being taken up by some governments at national and sub-national levels as well as by the private sector is natural capital accounting, which aims at including nature - or natural capital - in national

and corporate planning, management and accounting. This enables the value of biodiversity and ecosystem services to be taken into account in economic development, supporting more sustainable and equitable economic growth.

Sustainable Development Goal 10
Reduce inequality within and among countries

Reducing inequalities, the aim of SDG 10, is intimately linked with progress across the agenda. Indeed, the extreme levels of income and wealth inequality we see today are inimical to achieving all the aims of sustainable development - environmental, social and economic aspects. For example, studies have shown that we will not be able to eradicate extreme poverty without also tackling economic inequality. Progressive, rights-based social protection, wage and fiscal policies (10.4) are essential to achieve and finance the aims of SDG 10 and the entire 2030 Agenda. Wherever human migration (10.7) is forced into unsafe, disorderly, and irregular channels, migrants' human rights to a decent standard of living (SDG 1), food (SDG 2), healthcare (SDG 3), education (SDG 4), clean water and sanitation (SDG 6), decent work (SDG 8), and safe housing conditions (SDG 11) are compromised.

Challenges
Goal 10 represents perhaps the most ground-breaking element of the 2030 Agenda, and one of the most challenging goals to achieve for both developed and developing countries. Political ownership at the highest levels, from governments to UN agencies, is lacking while actual government policy and budgeting decisions are often at cross-purposes to the commitments towards this goal. Reducing inequality can be politically challenging because it calls into question issues of relative wealth and power. According to the NGO ActionAid, many countries do not have the laws or policies in place required to implement this goal. Consequently, groups of disadvantaged people, including rural or indigenous communities, people with disabilities, Dalits, women and girls, racial/ethnic minorities, LGBTQI people, older persons, suffer disproportionately where policies ensuring equality are lacking.

Economic inequality (target 10.1) is increasing in most regions of the world; even the more modest shared prosperity indicator that focuses on the growth of the incomes of the bottom 40 per cent shows limited progress. Moreover, women remain over-represented in the poorest groups. The experience of NGOs suggests that social exclusion and discrimination (10.2 and 10.3) are increasing rather than decreasing, with particular concerns about the growth in xenophobia, nationalism, racism, religious fundamentalism, intolerance, and gender discrimination. The policy areas identified in target 10.4 (fiscal, wage and social protection policy) do not seem to be advancing in the right direction fast enough to reduce extreme inequality by 2030. In particular, precarious wages and working conditions are still the norm for the vast majority of workers around the world, while the prevalent trend in fiscal policy is austerity, which has been shown to increase rather than reduce inequalities. Regulation of global financial markets (10.5) is still insufficient, despite growing awareness that financial speculation in the area of food commodities, for example, can have a devastating impact on already-impoverished communities.

Reducing inequalities among countries is an equally important plank of Goal 10. In terms of enhancing the power of developing countries in global economic and financial institutions (10.6), NGOs highlight inequities in representation at the International Monetary Fund and World Trade Organisation as

particularly problematic, as well as the continued use of the OECD and G20 (where low-income countries do not have an equal seat at the table) as forums for consequential economic decision-making. The lack of enabling, human rights-based policies around migration was identified as a major barrier to meeting especially target 10.7, but also commitments across the Agenda. The current migration regime perpetuates extreme inequalities both within and between countries, especially in the context of climate change. Meanwhile, trends in trade, investments and ODA (10.A and B) are not looking promising for developing countries, with Investor State Dispute Settlements (ISDS) highlighted as a particularly egregious practice, which privileges the rights of multinational corporations over governments' environmental and human rights obligations. Moreover, financial flows into developing countries have to be looked at taking into account the outflows, including illicit financial flows, which by most estimates far outweigh ODA.

Another concern raised by NGOs regarding the implementation and monitoring of Goal 10 is around data and indicators. Disaggregated data - and reliable data on some crucial Goal 10 areas like discrimination - are lacking, and the SDG10 indicators have been criticized as inadequate as and far narrower than the targets themselves. For example, the indicator for 10.4 does not capture fiscal policy issues, although this is named in the target, while there is no Goal 10 indicator which captures the gap between the richest and the poorest (i.e. an economic inequality indicator like the Gini coefficient or Palma ratio rather than 'shared prosperity' indicator).

Progress

Despite this dispiriting picture, NGOs have identified a number of promising practices:

- Laws preventing discrimination on the basis of poverty/economic status (e.g. France);
- Information and education campaigns designed to eradicate discrimination, eliminate stereotypical attitudes, and preconceptions;
- Education and training for public officials (including police officers, social workers etc.) to enable them to deal effectively and fairly with people living in poverty, without stigmatizing them;
- Minimum (living) wage policies;
- Action at the global level to tackle illicit financial flows and reform the international corporate taxation system, a massive driver of inequality within and between countries;
- Social & solidarity economies, and community banks and finance;
- Policies and programs to promote agroecology, as well as rain-fed agriculture solutions, storage and capture of green water, as well as to reduce pollution of blue water sources
- Good practices in birth registration to prevent statelessness (e.g. Jordan, UNHCR)
- Separation of public service provision from immigration enforcement (e.g. Sweden, Chile)
- Provision of healthcare and education regardless of migration status (e.g. Argentina, Canada, Jordan, Greece);
- Partnerships with communities that empower community members to address discrimination and create more inclusive environments, and multilateral and cross-sectoral collaborations.

Goal 10 is interdependent with the achievement of other goals, as transformation of the conditions that prohibit or enable governments to provide basic services and fulfil the human rights of their populations is required if the SDGs are to be achieved. One example of the interconnections is in access to water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH). Reducing unequal access to safe, clean water is essential to reducing

poverty, increasing economic productivity and sustaining economic progress, promoting peace and reducing instability. Ensuring universal and equitable access to WASH can have direct, immediate and long-term social, economic and environmental results, making a difference to billions of people in both developed and developing countries. By scaling up water solutions and rain-fed agriculture, inequalities both within countries and between countries can be addressed.

Sustainable Development Goal 13
Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts

Urgent action to combat the causes of climate change and to address its impacts requires urgent and committed global and national interventions to mitigate climate change, manage and reduce disaster risks, increase structural, social, and environmental resilience, and to restore the environments and communities affected. Planning for this effort must be disaster risk-informed, inclusive, and aimed at long-term solutions for resilience and sustainability. Actions must reach those furthest behind and those who are most vulnerable affected by sudden [both immediately] and [from] slow-onset impacts and threats, taking into account national traditions and capacities. Evaluation of efficacy and accountability must examine through disaggregation of assessment, data collection, and analysis the benefits to each differing stakeholder group. To succeed in these efforts and empower communities through resilience, this work must be done multilaterally and through cross-sector cooperation.

Actions need to be aligned with the Paris Agreement to limit global temperature rise to 1.5 degrees, engaging multilateral cooperation and cross-sector collaboration at all levels, prioritising nature- and ecosystem- based adaptation in addition to ecologically-sustainable renewable energy development, and building capacity for all stakeholders to contribute their experience and knowledge to tackle climate change prevention, mitigation, adaptation, impact reduction and early warning.

Although progress has been made to move low-income countries to low carbon economies, challenges still remain in areas of finance for climate change mitigation, climate-risk awareness, integration of wider environmental sustainability principles and policy, and data for achieving SDG 13.

Target 13.1 Strengthen resilience and adaptive capacity to climate-related hazards and natural disasters in all countries.

Challenges
Evidence to date suggests that the majority of countries around the world are failing to adequately implement policies and sufficient finance to build resilience and the accumulation of CO_2 in the atmosphere continues to accelerate ever faster, coupled with short-term profits and unsustainable economic growth. This impacts both people and natural systems.

Scientific evidence shows that unprecedented concentrations of greenhouse gases (GHG), driven by human activities such as the burning of fossil fuels and deforestation, are contributing to climate changes including warming of the oceans and atmosphere, rising sea levels and diminished snow and ice. These changes are creating new risks and exacerbating existing vulnerabilities. The impacts of these climate changes are already damaging infrastructure, ecosystems, and the social and cultural systems that provide

essential benefits and quality of life to communities. The three highest climate-related disasters by type globally are flooding, storms, and earthquakes[4]. There were 3,148 (43.4 per cent) disasters caused by flooding over the last 18 years, (2000 – 2017) followed by storms which represented 2,049 (28.2 per cent) and earthquakes 563 (7.8 per cent). Low and lower-middle income countries suffered the highest number of deaths due to climate-related disasters during this period with almost 855,000 people killed, the majority in geophysical events. Upper-middle-income countries suffered 236,078 deaths with high-income countries suffering 120,339. People living in low-income countries are seven times more likely to die from a climate-related disaster than people living in high-income countries. At the forefront of climate related disasters are grassroots indigenous communities in low-income countries, and residents of urban informal settlements. People living in low-income countries are vulnerable to climate-related disasters due to population growth, land use changes (SDG 1, 2, 5, 11 and 15), environmental degradation (SDG 6, 12, 14, & 15), weak governance (SDG 16), poverty (SDG 1) and inequality (SDG 5 & 10). Compounding these challenges is the cost of climate change related disasters.

While climate change related disasters result in loss of lives, they also have long term economic consequences. However, concerns have been raised over the lack of economic data in many mainstream disaster reports, a failure of transparency in climate finance, and a lack of targeted funding for efforts of resiliency building, disaster risk reduction, and disaster risk informed development. Assistance to LDCs remains too low and financial assistance for LDCs is rising too slowly. More needs to be done to address the loss and damage associated with impacts of climate change, including extreme events, as per the Warsaw International Mechanism. Even after establishing loss and damage as a bona fide third pillar of climate action in the Paris Agreement not much has been done to ensure financial support to address, avert and minimize climate-induced loss and damage.

In addition to the socio-economic threats, climate change and climate change induced disasters create immediate and long-term social and emotional devastation. The WHO estimates that 20-40 per cent of populations affected by natural disasters will experience mild psychological distress, and 30-50 per cent will experience moderate to severe psychological distress. Attention must be paid to these psychosocial needs in order to achieve a holistic approach to climate action and disaster resilience.

Climate change impacts natural systems, including ecosystems and biodiversity, as well as people. But nature can and should be part of the solution, and wider climate and land use planning and policies should better recognise and support ecosystem-based adaptation in disaster risk reduction. With 2021-2030 set to be the UN Decade on Restoration, and ambitious targets for restoration already in place under the Bonn Challenge, restoration should take an ecosystem approach and support climate adaptation in addition to mitigation and other global targets relating to biodiversity, water and food production. Both human and nature-based approaches to mitigations and adaptations to climate change must be evaluated for feedback.

Progress
Momentum is continuing to build around strengthening resilience around climate-related disasters. The Paris Agreement was a great moment of unity around a commitment to action and civil society organizations have started to invest their resources in climate action and resilience.

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[4] Economic Losses, poverty and disasters 1998-2017. Produced by the Centre for Research on the Epidemiology of Disasters CRED, UNISDR - Page 7. https://www.unisdr.org/we/inform/publications/61119

Several actions and processes aimed at resilience building were noted by NGOs for their effectiveness in disaster risk reduction as well as sustainable disaster risk informed development through capacity building and local participation. National consultation forums bring together NGO/CSOs under one national platform in order to build capacity and work both collaboratively and inclusively. The work of churches and other faith-based organizations has been raising awareness, enabling self-advocacy, building capacity building, and focusing on community-based projects that lead to long term resilience and adaptation. Also cited as a step toward building capacity in the work of resilience was application in multiple contexts are the UN Habitat's *Planning for Climate Change Toolkit* and the UNESCO handbook for decision-making, *Climate Risk-Informed Decision Analysis* or CRIDA. It has been piloted in over a dozen countries and is currently being used by cities to increase the resilience of local populations, ecosystems, and infrastructure. As an example of collaboration in improving resilience of ecosystems, a global effort, in several countries, is being made in order to restore mangroves, thereby combating coastal erosion from sea level rise. While whole earth systems thinking and nature-based approaches to finding solutions are improving the sustainability of mitigation actions.

Target 13.2 Integrate climate change measures into national policies, strategies, and planning.

Challenges
Globally, there is a lack of commitment to the allocation of resources to integrate climate change measures into national policies, strategies, and planning. NGOs observe a failure to connect international frameworks closely, in order to assist governments, civil society and local communities in integrating sustainable development, environmental protection, resilience building, disaster risk reduction, and human rights into concrete action plans. National policies, strategies, and planning for climate change need to impose regulations to the causes (for example, a reluctance to address through policies problematic agricultural practices in climate change policy, and to acknowledge that intensive animal agriculture contributes around 14.5 per cent GHG emission), as well as ensuring solutions for the effects the social dimensions of loss and displacement caused by climate change. National and cross border policies need to be formed with human rights and environmental sustainability at the centre and enforced in order to create protections for those displaced by environmental degradation and climate related disasters. In particular, the global expansion and uptake of renewable energy is key to meeting the Paris Agreement, but this expansion must adhere to strong environmental and social safeguards in order to ensure coherent and integrated delivery of the entire 2030 Agenda, in particular SDGs 7, 9, 10, 11, 12, 14, 15 and 17. This holistic approach has yet to be applied to most Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs).

Progress
There has been some progress in integrating climate change measures into national policies, strategies, and planning. Supported by the Global Environment Facility, eleven governments along the Red Sea/Rift Valley flyway are working together to integrate biodiversity into five economic sectors, including renewable energy development, in support of wider sustainable development. Separately, a human-centred ecosystem-based approach to climate planning has strengthened where indigenous cultural heritage and traditional ecological knowledge are integrated into mainstream policies and approaches to combating climate change. A human-centred, ecosystems-based approach can address cultural, heritage and social dimensions of climate change that reflect a solution inclusive of all citizens in a national

strategic plan. Small-scale food producers using agroecology are making a significant contribution to mitigating climate change and developing sustainable territorial food systems.

Target 13.3 Improve education, awareness-raising and human and institutional capacity on climate change mitigation, adaptation, impact reduction, and early warning.

Challenges
The challenges to education, awareness-raising and capacity-building for climate change mitigation and resilience often stem from an overly narrow concept of who an educator is and what it means to empower people with the capacity to be climate resilient. These efforts need to address all areas of resilience — structural, ecological, psychosocial, cultural, biological — and must empower and include all members of a community as well as the wisdom within that community. Innovations in education and awareness raising from outside the mainstream are often overlooked and underfunded. Traditional indigenous knowledge may be absent from formal education initiatives. The potential of the arts and culture is underutilized. Capacity building remains predominantly a "developed" to "developing" or North to South flow. And tools and protocols for monitoring and evaluation need to be accessible to all, in high-tech and low-tech formats, and used to inform and teach about the continuing changes to our climate.

Progress
Some progress has also been made towards SDG 13.3 improving education, awareness-raising, and human and institutional capacity. A number of countries have been holding climate change related capacity building consultation forums inclusive of civil society in order to raise skills and awareness around the issue in a collaborative way. Many schools around the world have implemented Climate Action Days in and out of the classroom. Projects initiated by the Museums and Climate Change Network incorporate climate change into the interpretation of and educational programs at museums and historic sites. Faith-based organizations are using capacity building around climate change to support community-based projects that aim to improve local resilience and adaptation. While professional networks in the fields of culture, heritage, and the arts are also speaking out on climate change and the need for urgent action.

Target 13.A Implement the commitment undertaken by developed-country parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change to a goal of mobilizing jointly $100 billion annually by 2020 from all sources to address the needs of developing countries in the context of meaningful mitigation actions and transparency on implementation and fully operationalize the Green Climate Fund through its capitalization as soon as possible

Challenges
Climate finance lacks clear definitions and political will for providing adequate funding to those who need it most. Currently, finance for climate action is often offered as loans, and those in need have limited possibility to access the financial resources required. Currently, more financial support for short term mitigation is being observed than for long term resilience building. This brings uncertainty among stakeholders as to how the funds that are to be mobilized will be prioritized and allocated, and when these funds will begin to support the work that urgently must take place.

Progress

Because climate change does not wait, civil society is not waiting for the presence of funds in order to take action. Civil society organizations have started to invest their own resources in climate action that includes disaster risk reduction and strengthening of resilience through sustainable development. However, these donor dependent resources will span the breadth of the cost of the problem. And so NGOs call for the operationalizing of the Green Climate Fund and the mobilization of $100 billion as a matter of urgency.

Target 13.B Promote mechanisms for raising capacity for effective climate change-related planning and management in the least developed countries and Small Island developing States, including focusing on women, youth and local and marginalized communities.

Challenges

NGOs confront three main challenges in achieving Target 13.B: (1) slow adoption and lack of application of the Gender Action Plan under the UNFCCC; (2) the use of the land in LDCs and the water around SIDs as dumping grounds for the world's toxic and plastic waste without structures and mechanisms for management and binding regulation; and (3) a lack of financial support to empower Least Developed Countries, Small Island Developing States and especially the women, youth, older persons, indigenous people, and local and marginalized communities within those countries in order to collaborate on climate action.

Progress

When looking at the progress made toward Target 13. B, the NGO community applauds the Gender Action Plan under the Paris Agreement for its recognition of the impact of climate change on women. Secondly, capacity building programs in West Africa based on agroecology exemplify a positive application of capacity building within LDCs, while short circuits for food production and consumption have made communities in LDCs and SIDs more resilient to the impacts of climate induced food shortages. Additionally, private-public partnerships are forming to regulate and reduce waste.

Sustainable Development Goal 16 - Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels

Strengthening peaceful societies, strong institutions, and access to justice are at the core of SDG 16, and they have profound relevance throughout the SDGs as a whole. The 2030 Agenda is dependent upon an unerring focus on the responsibility to achieve a peaceful, inclusive, and robust future, guided by the rule of law.

Peaceful Societies

The rule of law and human rights go hand-in-hand for ensuring individual and collective security and for combating escalating global threats, such as attacks on democratic institutions of governance, terrorism, violence (16.1), organized crime (16.4), human trafficking (5.2, 8.7, 16.2), forced labor (5.2, 8.7; 16.2), and illicit arms and financial flows (16.4). Increasingly, starvation is being used as a weapon against communities, exacerbating conflicts and tensions and threatening human lives, especially among

marginalized people. Rule of law and human rights-based approaches can play a critical role in conflict prevention, conflict de-escalation, post-conflict transitions, transitional justice, peacebuilding, and responses to natural disasters (1.5, 2.4, 14, 15), climate impacts (13), and public health threats (3). Such strategies and approaches need to be integrated into international, regional, and national action plans. We urge Member States, financial institutions, donors, and other entities to provide adequate resources for effective implementation of action plans (17.2, 17.3, 17.9), to strengthen transparency and accountability (16.6), and to enhance coordination across government and civil society on priorities, resources, implementations, and evaluations (17.16, 17.17).

Among the actions to promote women's participation in peace processes and address the disproportionate impacts of conflicts on women, we encourage further progress in United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 national action plans.

Integrating rule of law solutions in new approaches to forced migration can address drivers of forced migration and displacement (10.7). A global conference of international and national officials, NGOs, and experts from the humanitarian, academic, and legal communities last year explored the drivers, risks, and challenges surrounding the recent flows of refugees and migrants worldwide and the specific issues in countries of origin, transit, and destination.

Strong Institutions
Some Member States have achieved measurable success in promoting good governance by enacting reforms to build effective, accountable, and inclusive institutions (16.6). Yet, the overall global performance for rule of law declined for the second year, particularly in the areas of independent and impartial judiciary (16.3, 16.6), a free press (16.10), and legislative oversight of governmental powers (16.6)[5]. We urge Member States to reaffirm their commitment to these areas of SDG 16.

The NGO Major Group is deeply concerned with the growing incidences of arbitrary arrest, detention, harassment, and violent attacks committed against judges, lawyers, others in the legal profession, human rights and environmental defenders, and members of the press (16.10.1) who serve essential roles in upholding and advocating for an independent and impartial judiciary, equal access to justice, effective legal assistance, and the protection of fundamental rights. We call on Member States to respect, protect, and guarantee independent and impartial judiciary, to adhere to the rule of law, and to investigate all such incidents, hold perpetrators accountable, and provide effective remedies for victims.

Several initiatives and national reforms responsive to SDG 16 implementation are strengthening good governance practices. These initiatives bring together governments and civil society organizations, to support Member States in their efforts to create and deliver on action plans for inclusive, transparent, and accountable governance (16.6). Transforming those action plans into concrete policy commitments and actions to fight corruption at all levels (16.5) is vital to building strong institutions, upholding the rule of law, ensuring respect for human rights, and enabling sustainable economies.

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[5] World Justice Project, *WJP Rule of Law Index 2019*, https://worldjusticeproject.org/our-work/research-and-data/wjp-rule-law-index-2019

To empower people and achieve truly inclusive societies, we urge Member States to strengthen efforts to ensure no one is deprived of access to public services and justice (16.3, 16.6.2), full and equal participation in society (16.7, 16.B), individual rights, and enjoyment of a safe, clean, healthy, and sustainable environment (1, 3, 6, 11, 12, 14, 15, 16.1). For a truly inclusive society to exist, policies and practices must ensure that not one person is left behind.

Inclusiveness depends upon the protection of human rights, including the right to access information (16.10); the fundamental freedoms of expression, peaceful assembly and association (16.10); and non-discrimination (16.B). The majority of Member States now have laws and policies to ensure the right to access information and are increasingly launching e-government initiatives and open data projects to proactively make information available[6]. We commend such efforts and encourage further actions to fully ensure effective public access to information, including online (9, 16.10, 17.8), and as related to human rights and sustainable development (4.7). We encourage Member States to respect independent national human rights institutions and their role to support strengthening human rights and the rule of law as consistent with international human rights treaties and international norms (16.A).

Partnerships must be based in inclusiveness and meet the interests of sustainable development and community well-being while safeguarding against promotion of private interests and conflicts of interest. Throughout the world, inclusive capacity building projects build strong institutions and strong societies (16.6, 16.7, 17.17). Some convene public and private stakeholders to build participatory strategies to strengthen water governance, including for climate adaptation and mitigation; while others promote cooperative approaches to foster sustainable environments, reduce environmental harms, increase renewable energy, and address conflicts over natural resources, including their potential impacts on migrants, displaced persons, women, children, older persons, youth, indigenous peoples, and other vulnerable populations (7.2, 11, 12, 13.B, 16.7.1).

Access to Justice for All
Ensuring access to justice for all (16.3) is essential to effectuating a comprehensive and fair rule of law. Enhancing justice systems can help resolve disputes related to economic, social, cultural, and environmental issues of sustainable development and provide a more predictable and stable environment for businesses and investors. Protecting an independent and impartial judiciary and independent legal profession is essential to ensuring equality before the law without discrimination, protecting against abuses of power, and upholding the rule of law.

Sustainable changes to expand access to justice must leave no one behind. Formal and informal justice systems and legal empowerment frameworks should incorporate human rights-based strategies to ensure inclusiveness, with particular attention to women, racial/ethnic, caste, religious minorities, persons with disabilities, and other disadvantaged groups who face persistent barriers to justice (16.B).

The NGO community calls for and stresses the importance of legal identity for all, including birth registration, by 2030 or before (16.9). NGOs have worked in coalitions to advocate for legal identity for all in order to empower vulnerable populations living in persistent poverty (1, 16.9). Additionally, in refugee camps, migrant settlements, and in communities where displaced persons have settled, NGOs are

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[6] Open Knowledge International, *Global Open Data Index*.

providing formal and informal education and integration opportunities to promote peace-building and are raising awareness of the right to legal identity and its importance increasing access to public services and livelihood opportunities.

Sustainable Development Goal 17. Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development

SDG 17 has at its core the aims of strengthening the means of implementation and the partnerships *essential* to all phases of work that result in empowering sustainable development from within and achievement of the goals should be thought of as the primary step in international commitment to Agenda 2030. And yet, civil society finds itself calling out with the same appeals for inclusion, collaboration, cooperation, transparency, accountability, and political will that it has called for since the first convening of the High-Level Political Forum.

Inclusion, as it stands for the meaningful participation of all stakeholders, should be the base of gathering inputs, decision making for policy, implementation, and evaluation. Inclusion requires disaggregation not only of data but of constituencies. To avoid controversy or appeal to a consensus, too often the language of policy hides identities behind the mask of the term "marginalized". In so doing, the differing experiences that must be seen and heard in order to leave no one behind, go unheard and the aims of the Goals fall short of achievement for everyone. Women, girls, children, youth, older persons, indigenous peoples, the LGBTQI community, persons with disabilities, those living in remote rural communities, migrants, refugees, climate change impacted displaced persons, our natural world and its animal inhabitants, all have a unique story. Moreover, they each have the capacity to contribute to changing their own futures. Speaking on behalf of others is not empowerment. Empowerment makes space for others to have value, to make decisions for themselves, take action that carries them and others forward.

At the same time that disaggregation is critical to everyone achieving the Goals; the distinction of global citizenship provides guidelines for more meaningful aggregation. Global citizenship factors in the reality of our global interdependent co-arising while recognizing the rights for all people to live in peace and well-being and to work with dignity. Making the tenets of global citizenship primary and central to policy and practice, rather than an afterthought to economic development, would lay the groundwork for more effective partnerships.

With true inclusion comes true collaboration and cooperation. Partnerships too often have followed a model of donor paired with "recipient", and recipient acting on behalf of "beneficiaries." That reflects a hierarchy or chain of command, not a partnership. Increasingly, in the NGO community, partners are collaborators and what used to be thought of as "beneficiaries" are actually true partners. NGOs focus more on building capacity so that people can guide their own development and sustain that work into the future. NGOs have begun to let go of a "project" model imposed on a community and shift to a program model directed by local communities themselves.

The NGO community further notes weaknesses in transparency and accountability. Economic, financial, trade and investment decisions remain in the monopoly of international financial institutions with their own development agendas and with bureaucracies that slow down the flow of funds to urgently needed actions and bar those outside from accessing needed development funds. Little progress has been made in

introducing a financial transactions tax or the establishment of an intergovernmental tax body for international tax cooperation at UN level. Furthermore, civil society continues to call for trade to be organized in multilateral fora along principles that support the rights-based and environmentally protective implementation of the SDGs, ensuring policy space for environmental and social regulation at national level, towards socio-economic transformation. Equally concerning is the continued influence and power of private sector donors toward decision making, prioritization, and the form of projects. Shifting the fulcrum point to global citizenry would provide a means for re-establishing the role of financial institutions in realizing the SDGs toward it occupying a smaller, and more accurate place in determining who gets what and how.

However, lack of transparency goes beyond financial practices and negatively impacts implementation processes. There is inconsistency in monitoring and reporting on the *effectiveness* of decision making and planning processes. Accounting for values fulfilment is a first step toward establishing equity because values underpin actions and are primal drivers of behaviours. Values accountability is a means for ensuring inclusion and transparency and for establishing common platforms for a way forward.

The NGO community continues to observe a lack of political will to act and exercise the sovereign obligation of regulating markets, particularly those sectors with high levels of negative externalities, including the introduction of capital controls to reduce the risk of macroeconomic shocks on developing countries. This lack of will takes on two forms: failure to meet financial commitments and failure to act upon concerns and decisions agreed upon in these halls and integrate the SDGs into National Plans. The Global North must meet its commitment to funding. However, instead we have seen a shrinking of aid for Least Developed Countries, and ODA that is sometimes conditioned upon compliance with a particular political agenda, or misused for militarization, or prioritized for projects that do not advance development in sustainable ways. Furthermore, the lack of accountability for achievement of the 2030 Agenda continues to result in not reaching those furthest behind.

In a year when we are called upon to examine the ways in which we empower citizens, we must reflect on the way our partnerships, processes, decision-making, and means of taking action empower, include, and both use and raise the capacity of all citizens. Therefore, action must be taken to finally and truly strengthen the means of implementation through empowerment to revitalize our partnerships through meaningful inclusion.

Interlinkages across the Sustainable Development Goals

The goals of the 2030 Agenda are interlinked, indivisible, and grounded in human rights so as to achieve sustainable, resilient and equitable development. While these ideals may resonate widely among NGOs as well as governments and other stakeholders, the challenge is how to translate these ideals into practice. What are the most strategic entry points with the greatest co-benefits across the SDGs? How can local authorities, NGOs and businesses integrate multiple and interlinked SDGs into local policies and programs?

Many NGOs, governments and private sector leaders have argued that climate change (SDG 13) ranks highest on the 2030 Agenda because it threatens survival of both people and planet; however, a closer

examination shows that its achievement is dependent upon progress being made in all of the SDGs. Climate change increases the potential for conflict over natural resources such as water, creates internally displaced peoples as environmental refugees, increases risks for ill-health and threatens food security and terrestrial and marine biodiversity. Precious resources—human and financial—that are normally needed to help reduce poverty are diverted to cope with the aftermath of natural disasters and environmental degradation. Thus, it is evident that achieving the aims of SDG 13 requires work across several SDGs, and strengthening the implementation mechanisms and coordination between the Paris Agreement, Financing for Development, Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction, human rights instruments such as the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, the Declaration on the Rights of Peasants and the UN Strategic Plan on Biodiversity and post-2020 biodiversity framework as well as the Global Strategic Framework for Food Security and Nutrition of the UN Committee of Food Security. Co-benefits to climate adaptation and mitigation can be seen across a wide range of SDGs including the reduction of health risks like malaria (SDG 3), development of renewable energy (SDG 7), creation of jobs (SDG 8), conservation of life below water (SDG 14) and life on land (SDG 15), peace (SDG 16) and increased sources of financing for poor countries (SDG 17). Similarly, the SDGs can contribute significantly to accelerating action on climate change, with education (SDG 4), nature conservation (SDGs 14/15) and justice (SDG 16) playing a particularly important role by including global citizenship curriculum on the protection of nature, climate justice and human rights.

Peace (SDG 16) has been identified as a high priority, but it too depends upon progress being made across the Sustainable Development Goals. Wars, internal conflicts, and community violence not only damage institutions, justice systems and rule of law, but also harm societies and social structures (SDGs 10, 11, 12), increase poverty (SDG 1), make people more vulnerable to disease, malnutrition, and hunger (SDGs 2 and 3), interrupt education (SDG 4), and leave millions without livelihoods (SDG 8). Furthermore, wars disrupt ecological systems (SDG 13), affecting ecosystems and biodiversity (SDGs 14 and 15), and natural resources (SDG 7), including access to clean water and food (SDGs 2, 6, 14 and 15). Conflicts – like natural disasters—also have a disproportionate impact on women and girls, indigenous peoples, children and older person, persons with disabilities (SDG 5) and ecologically vulnerable groups, exacerbating existing inequalities within and among countries (SDG 10). Conflicts are also characterized by the displacement of refugees and migrants, trafficking of women, girls and children. In addition, when a State or its people are the victims of conflicts, progress in social and economic development rolls backward. Moreover, conflicts are often related to a vacuum in political leadership that is filled by criminals, military rule and non-state actors bearing arms which then causes safeguards against corruption to be weakened at all levels so that international partners (SDG 17) do not have a stable political environment to help those who are most in need. Thus, while as one NGO put it, "Peace is like water—it is gives life to nature and human beings—and without it, nothing can survive," the achievement of peace depends on bringing about an overall more sustainable world where human rights for all and respect for our environment are equally observed.

A critical entry point to building resilient societies and ensuring greater personal, national, and international security may come through greater investment in quality education (SDG 4) that includes pre-school and life-long learning, and that includes the understanding that we are all global citizens, are known to yield high returns and positive multiplier effects across many SDGs. For example, the co-benefits for investments in girls' education (SDG 5) are proven to have a particularly positive impact on

all of society, reducing child marriage, lowering maternal mortality rates, reducing adolescent birth rates, empowering family planning, decreasing risks to HIV/AIDS and other infectious diseases, increasing youth access to decent work (SDG 8), and reducing poverty (SDG 1) in all ages, including for families and in old age. However, access to education can help reduce inequalities (SDG 10) only if special measures are taken to protect against any discrimination including--but not limited to-- those involving gender, disability, sexual orientation, ethnicity, religion, economic, cultural, political or social status, race, or geographic location. Furthermore, access to education is often barred by lack of access to clean water (SDG 6), healthcare (SDG 3), poverty (SDG 1), disruption or displacement from natural disasters (SDG 13) or wars (SDG 16), and inequities (SDG 10), again exemplifying the interdependence of achievement of any one Goal.

Although the positive impacts of a holistic approach to the SDGs has received considerable attention during the HLPF, NGOs continue to observe siloed practices on the ground and cherry-picking of specific SDGs while missing the bigger picture. For example, large scale dams provide clean energy for cities, but they may also disrupt local sources of clean water for rural communities and migration routes of fish, impacting both ecological sustainability and food supply. Similarly, gender-blind macro-economic policies intended to provide "full and productive employment" can actually narrow opportunities for women and increase the gender pay gap. Moreover, decoupling economic growth from environmental degradation, such as through sustainable tourism, is an important goal. However, that too can further marginalize minority groups such as herders, fisheries, and mountain communities if their special circumstances are not taken into account.

As is often noted, the monitoring and evaluation of all SDGs has the potential to identify major opportunities as well as gaps in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. However, challenges exist, such as the lack of data that has been disaggregated for gender, age, geography, and disability status; weak accountability mechanisms; poor vertical integration of perspectives from villages, cities, and rural remote regions for regional and national planning; corruption; shrinking spaces for CSOs and journalists; and persecution of human and environmental rights defenders. It is critical that the lens of global citizenship be applied consistently such that the interdependencies of all the SDGs, and of the people whose survival depends on fulfilment of them, are more accurately factored in to success equations.

Conclusion

Noting the "interlinked and indivisible" nature of the 2030 Agenda and the imperative to leave no one behind, we call on the global community to implement a holistic, coherent, multi-sectoral, and multi-stakeholder approach to all decisions and actions in the process of implementing and achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. Partnerships are critical to gaining the comprehensive perspectives, expertise and resources necessary to this work. So, too, is the empowerment of all members of civil society. Working *together,* we can achieve these aims by 2030.

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