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Accelerated action and transformative pathways: realizing the decade of the action and delivery for sustainable development**Report of the Secretary-General****Summary**

The COVID-19 outbreak has reaffirmed the need to strengthen multilateral cooperation and governance to deal with global health emergencies and accelerate implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. To advance the decade of action and delivery for sustainable development, the response to COVID-19 and its impacts pursue a series of transformative pathways. The present report discusses in particular the accelerated actions required during and beyond the response to COVID-19 along two such pathways: reducing income inequality and eradicating extreme poverty, while reducing CO₂ emissions to limit global warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius. The report serves to inform the ECOSOC high-level segment in July 2020 and is complemented by the report of the Secretary-General E/HLS/2020/5 on “Long-term future trends and scenarios - impacts in the economic, social and environmental areas on the realization of the Sustainable Development Goals.”

I. Introduction

1. In accordance with the mandate provided by the General Assembly in resolutions 61/16 and 72/305 and the theme of “accelerated action and transformative pathways: realizing the decade of action and delivery for sustainable development”, the present report identifies accelerators for building synergies across economic, social and environmental dimensions and offers recommendations to inform the discussions of the high-level segment of the Economic and Social Council. It was informed by contributions from United Nations system entities and others and is complemented by the report E/HLS/2020/5 on “Long-term future trends and scenarios - impacts in the economic, social and environmental areas on the realization of the Sustainable Development Goals”.
2. The 2019 High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development, convened under the auspices of the Economic and Social Council, completed the first four-year cycle of follow-up and review of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The first cycle included Voluntary National Reviews presented by 142 countries on progress toward the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and culminated in an SDG Summit at the Heads of State and Government level in September 2019, when the HLPF was held under the auspices of the General Assembly.
3. The SDG Summit noted that the implementation of the SDGs has seen progress in some important areas.¹ For example, extreme poverty and child mortality continue to fall, and hepatitis is on the retreat, with new chronic hepatitis B viral infections approaching zero. Access to safe drinking water and electricity have increased, and the proportion of the urban population living in slums is falling, while the coverage of terrestrial and marine protected areas has expanded and improved. Many countries have also incorporated the SDGs into their national development plans and strategies and established structures and mechanisms to facilitate coherent implementation and active participation of a wide range of stakeholders. Some countries have also linked the SDGs to their national or local budgets.
4. Notwithstanding these successes, the summit noted that the world is not on track in achieving most of the 169 targets that comprise the SDGs, particularly the 21 targets designated for implementation by 2020. Recent trends in areas with cross-cutting impact across the entire 2030 Agenda such as rising inequality, climate change, hunger and food insecurity, biodiversity loss and waste from human activity, threaten the aspirations for universal human well-being embedded in the SDGs. Slowdown in global economic growth and rising debt levels in many countries, along with lack of adequate financing, are other factors impeding progress in SDG implementation.
5. More recently, the outbreak of the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) has had devastating impacts on people’s lives and wellbeing. COVID-19 has also increased global economic risks that could negatively impact the implementation of the SDGs, particularly in the short-term. DESA, using a World Economic Forecasting Model, has estimated that global economic growth in 2020 could be reduced from a baseline scenario of 2.5 per cent to -3.2 per cent because of the coronavirus.² In a worst-case scenario, global output would contract by 4.9 per cent. In comparison, the world economy contracted by 1.7 per cent during the global financial crisis in 2009. The DESA analysis, however, doesn’t reflect the possible effects that the coronavirus may have on global value chains and change in consumer preferences.
6. The COVID-19 outbreak highlights the underlying fragilities at the core of our current global economic and social system – fragilities that the 2030 Agenda and the Paris Agreement on Climate Change were created to address. It underscores also our interdependence and the need to strengthen multilateral cooperation and governance. And it made the task for the Decade of Action both more challenging and more urgent.
7. We now have a triple imperative. We must respond urgently to stem the impact of the pandemic and suppress the transmission of the virus. We must work together to help governments and their people safeguard development gains and mitigate the pandemic’s socio-economic impacts. And we must work

¹ Global Sustainable Development Report 2019, UNDESA.

² UNDESA Monthly Briefing on the World Economic Situation and Prospects, No. 136, 1 April 2020.

to ensure that national, regional and global recovery efforts follow the north star of the 2030 Agenda and Paris Agreement on Climate Change, as a launchpad for a Decade of Action.

8. This report outlines the scale of the challenge ahead and considers scenarios for accelerated progress as it relates to two of the fundamental objectives of the 2030 Agenda: ending poverty and avoiding runaway climate change. It also elaborates on the contribution of the United Nations in advancing the Decade of Action, including in the area of Gender Equality.

Box 1 Possible economic and social effects of the novel corona virus (COVID-19)

The COVID-19 pandemic has triggered unprecedented restrictions on both the movement of people and economic activities and put the national healthcare systems in many countries under severe strain. More than 100 countries closed their borders in March, bringing the cross-border movement of people and tourism to an almost complete halt. The service sectors in Europe and North America, which account for more than a quarter of all jobs in these two regions, were particularly hard hit. The pandemic has also disrupted global supply chains and international trade, and millions of people became unemployed within a short period of time. The International Labour Organization has estimated that up to 195million jobs could be lost because of COVID-19. The economic implications of COVID-19 for developing countries are significant, particularly in terms of reduced trade and investment. Many governments have rolled out large stimulus packages to avert a sharp downturn in economic output, which could plunge the global economy into a deep recession. Many of these stimulus packages have been in excess of 2 per cent of gross domestic product of the respective countries.

The COVID-19 pandemic will not only suppress economic growth, but also adversely affect sustainable development. In Africa, the COVID-19 outbreak has put strained healthcare systems under further pressure. The most vulnerable, including women, children, the elderly and informal workers, are hardest hit. More than 50 per cent of the world's rural population and over 20 per cent of the urban population also lack health care coverage, and some 2.2 and 4.2 billion people are without access to water and basic sanitation respectively, making it difficult for them to prevent the virus through ordinary tasks such as cleaning their hands.

Source: DESA, Economic Analysis and Policy Division, 2020.

II. Transformative pathways to accelerate SDG implementation

9. If countries are to achieve the SDGs by 2030, they will need to adopt national implementation strategies that make inclusion, sustainability, resilience and carbon neutrality the core objective of all policies.
10. The *2019 Global Sustainable Development Report (GSDR)*³, a quadrennial publication prepared by a group of 15 independent scientists appointed by the Secretary-General to inform the work of the HLPF, has identified six entry points that offer great promise in achieving transformation in SDG implementation at the necessary scale and speed: (i) human well-being and capabilities; (ii) sustainable and just economies; (iii) food systems and nutrition patterns; (iv) energy decarbonization with universal access; (v) urban and peri-urban development; and (vi) global environmental systems. The GSDR also emphasizes that there is no single pathway in each of the six areas that will ensure successful implementation of the SDGs. Countries must instead pursue combination of policies within and across these areas. The UN system has produced detailed briefs on each of these entry-points in advance of the 2020 High-level Political Forum.
11. Given their overarching nature, this report focuses on two of these: the critical role that reduced income inequality can play in amplifying the effects of economic growth in eradicating extreme poverty by 2030 and the high economic, social and environmental benefits of rapid and sustained reductions in CO₂ emissions aligned with the 1.5C goal to limit the global temperature rise which would entail reaching carbon neutrality by 2050.
12. The Committee for Development Policy at its 22nd session in February 2020, for example, stressed the importance of addressing these two issues for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. Current trends in both

³ Independent Group of Scientists appointed by the Secretary-General, *Global Sustainable Development Report 2019: The Future is Now – Science for Achieving Sustainable Development*, (United Nations, New York, 2019).

areas, according to the Committee, are driving the implementation of the 2030 Agenda backwards, with rising inequalities in income and multiple other dimensions of well-being, along with a weak global response to climate change, leaving many people behind. Inequality and climate change are also at the core of the systems of synergies and trade-offs that make up the SDGs, and failure to act on them will mean deviation from the path set by the 2030 Agenda.

(a) **Advancing sustainable and just economies: make reduction in income inequality a key strategy to eradicate extreme poverty by 2030**

13. Progress in reducing poverty has slowed in recent years, reflecting weak GDP per capita growth in many regions. Nearly 9 per cent of the world's population continues to live on income below the extreme poverty line of \$1.90 per day. The number of people living in extreme poverty has also risen in several African countries where such levels are already very high. Poverty rates have also edged higher in parts of Latin America and the Caribbean as well as Western Asia.⁴ The latest projections suggest that in 2020 alone, COVID-19 pandemic could lead to up to 49 million people falling into poverty.
14. As growth in GDP per capita is expected to remain weak in many countries, the eradication of extreme poverty will need to rely to a greater extent on measures to reduce high levels of income inequality. **Poverty can be reduced through increases in income, through changes in the distribution of income, or through a combination of both. Poverty is very sensitive to changes in the distribution of income in society. Research has also shown that a more equitable income distribution can contribute to faster economic growth through greater spending power of the poor. A reduction in income inequality can thus provide critical momentum toward the global goal of ending extreme poverty by 2030. For this to happen, income inequality must come down globally, but particularly in the more populous countries where many people are poor.**
15. For example, if the 2.5 per cent GDP per capita growth rate in the least-developed countries in the past ten years is maintained during the decade of action, income inequality would need to be reduced by 75 per cent to eradicate extreme poverty by 2030. An average annual GDP per capita growth rate of 6 per cent over the remaining decade of the SDG period would require income inequality to be halved in order to eradicate poverty by 2030. However, the highest observed 10-year reduction in the Gini coefficient is around 30 per cent in several Commonwealth of Independent States.⁵ For non-LDCs in Africa, eradicating extreme poverty, without steep declines in income inequality, would require GDP per capita to grow by 8.7 per cent annually during the decade of action, compared to 0.5 per cent recorded over the most recent decade.⁶
16. The goal of eradicating extreme poverty by 2030 (SDG 1), which is central to achieving many other SDGs, is thus unlikely to be reached by 2030 unless strong and sustained growth in GDP per capita is accompanied by significant reduction in income inequality. According to DESA estimates in the *2019 Sustainable Development Outlook*, in the period 2000 to 2013, some two-thirds of the world's population lived in countries that experienced increased income inequality; 10 per cent witnessed no change; and 22 per cent saw a decline in this measure. While developing countries have made some headway in reducing income inequality, a more fundamental transformation is needed going forward.
17. Scenarios using the World Economic Forecasting Model of DESA illustrate well the magnitude of the challenge that lies ahead,⁷ quantifying the relationship between economic growth and reduction in income inequality and their effects on eradication of extreme poverty by 2030 through four scenarios, presented in Table 1.

⁴ World Economic Situation and Prospects 2020, UNDESA.

⁵ World Economic Situation and Prospects 2020, UNDESA.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ The conclusions of these scenarios do not fully reflect the impact of the COVID-19 crisis. Their relevance will depend on the duration of the crisis and the depth of the losses of income owing to the crisis, as well the speed of the recovery.

Table 1 The interlinkages between economic growth, reduction in income inequality and eradication of poverty in developing countries

Scenario	Average annual GDP per capita growth	Projected reduction in income inequality	Share of global population in extreme poverty by 2030	Share of African population in extreme poverty by 2030	Share of LDC population in extreme poverty by 2030
Baseline	3.7%	No change	7.7%	26.9%	36.9%
First	6.7%	No change	6.2%	21.9%	31.5%
Second	6.7%	-25% ⁸	4.3%	15.8%	25.3%
Poverty miracle	9.7%	-50%	3.2%	9.5%	16.9%

Source: DESA, Economic Analysis and Policy Division (forthcoming).

18. The baseline scenario, which is the most likely outcome, assumes continuation in the SDG period of the most recent forecast of 3.7 per cent global growth in GDP per capita in developing countries as well as no change in income inequality. In this scenario, roughly 7.7 per cent of the world’s population would remain in extreme poverty by 2030, or 653 million people, including about 26.9 per cent of people living in Africa and 36.9 per cent of those in the least-developed countries, far off the global ambition.
19. The first scenario assumes that annual growth in GDP per capita in developing countries rises to 6.7 per cent (3 percentage point annual increase for each country) in the remaining SDG period but with income inequality unchanged. In this scenario, the share of the world’s population living in extreme poverty by 2030 would decline to about 6.2 per cent, or 523 million people, from the baseline of 7.7 per cent, and in Africa and the LDCs to 22-32 per cent, still well off the global target.
20. The second scenario is based on the first scenario’s projection for the remaining SDG period of 6.7 per cent growth in GDP per capita but assuming the reduction in cumulative income inequality by 25 per cent over the decade in all developing countries. Under this scenario, the extreme poverty rate declines to about 4.3 per cent of the world’s population, or 364 million people, and 16-25 per cent in both Africa and the LDCs.
21. The ‘*poverty miracle*’ scenario, which relies on the highly ambitious assumptions of 9.7 per cent annual average growth in GDP per capita and 50 per cent reduction in cumulative income inequality, would lower the number of people in extreme poverty from 653 million to 230 million people by 2030, a decline of 65 per cent. In this scenario, extreme poverty would be eradicated in the Asia and the Pacific and the Latin America and the Caribbean regions. Extreme poverty would thus be concentrated in the Africa region in this scenario. The Africa region, as a result, would require additional targeted international support to achieve SDG1 by 2030.
22. **The four above scenarios demonstrate that achieving the goal of eradicating extreme poverty by 2030 will require a combination of policies that promote economic growth, income redistribution and international support. For example, the above analysis shows that global poverty can be brought down to about 3 percent of the world’s population by 2030 if an average annual global economic growth rate of nearly 10 per cent in GDP per capita is achieved, and if income inequality is reduced by half. This level of ambition would require extraordinary political will of the international community to achieve SDG1 by 2030. At the same time, the devastating health and economic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic provides a powerful justification for states to use the decade of action to “recover better” by rebuilding their healthcare and social protection systems, which should benefit people living in poverty.**

⁸ The decline in inequality is measured as the percentage decline in the standard deviation of log income, as described in WESP 2020 and Bourguignon (2003).

The decade of action could also be used to make major investments in sustainable development and climate-related infrastructure, which would improve the well-being of people living in poverty who are hard hit by climate change and other gaps in sustainable development. The promotion of greater economic growth with equity also offers an opportunity to all states to rethink their education, labour market, tax and transfer policies. In addition, donor countries and other development partners could significantly increase poverty-focused development assistance to those countries most at risk of not achieving SDG1 by 2030.

- (b) **Energy decarbonization with universal access:** *commit to rapid and sustained CO₂ reductions during the decade of action – by at least 45% in 2030 (below 2010 levels) and reach net zero CO₂ emissions by 2050 at the latest.*
23. According to the 2018 *Special Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change*, human activities are estimated to have caused approximately 1 degree Celsius global warming by 2017 above pre-industrial levels. Global warming will reach and overshoot 1.5 degrees Celsius between 2030 and 2050 if current trends continue (*high confidence*). As the Special Report highlights, climate-related risks for natural and human systems for a 1.5 degrees Celsius average global temperature rise scenario are significantly lower than in a 2 degrees Celsius scenario. Exposure to risk is highly asymmetrical and depends on the magnitude and rate of warming, geographic location, levels of development and vulnerability, and on the effective implementation of adaptation and mitigation strategies, or lack thereof.
 24. Anthropogenic greenhouse gas emissions have already irreversibly altered the global climate system compared to pre-industrial levels. These include increases in mean temperature in most land and ocean regions; hot extremes; heavy precipitation and floods; and higher probability of drought and precipitation. By 2100, global sea level rise is projected to be around one meter lower with global warming of 1.5 degrees Celsius compared to 2 degrees Celsius. Sea level rise is also expected to continue well beyond 2100 and its magnitude will depend on the emission pathways pursued by countries.
 25. Limiting the global temperature rise to 1.5 degrees Celsius is projected to lower the impacts on global public goods like biodiversity, terrestrial, freshwater and coastal ecosystems and to retain more of their services to humans. Restricting global warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius is also projected to reduce increases in ocean temperature as well as associated rise in ocean acidity and decreases in ocean oxygen levels. Consequently, ensuring that global warming doesn't exceed 1.5 degrees Celsius is expected to reduce risks to marine biodiversity, fisheries, and all types of ecosystems and their functions and services to humans. Certain population groups are particularly at higher risk of adverse consequences of global warming of 1.5 degrees Celsius and beyond. These include disadvantaged and vulnerable populations, indigenous peoples and local communities dependent on agricultural and coastal livelihoods. Regions at disproportionately higher risk include the Arctic ecosystem, dryland regions, small island developing States and the LDCs.
 26. According to the 2018 IPCC Special Report, different pathways can achieve the net emissions reductions necessary to limit global warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius.
 27. The Special Report highlights four scenarios that would enable countries to achieve zero net emissions by 2050 and limit global warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius with no or limited overshoot but applying different policies. Select drivers of the four scenarios are presented in Table 3.

Table 2 Select scenario drivers by 2030*(all figures in percentages with decreases in brackets)*

	First scenario	Second scenario	Third scenario	Fourth scenario
CO ₂ emissions	(58)	(47)	(41)	4
Coal share in energy mix	(77)	(61)	(75)	(59)
Nuclear share in energy mix	59	83	98	106
Renewable energy in electricity production	60	58	48	25
Methane emissions from agriculture	(24)	(48)	1	14
Carbon dioxide removal	Afforestation	Small use of carbon capture and storage	Very high use of carbon capture and storage	Exceptionally high use of carbon capture and storage

Source: 2018 Special Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change.

28. In the *first scenario*, social, business and technological innovations result in lower energy demand while living standards rise, especially in the global South. An optimized energy system enables rapid decarbonization of energy supply. Afforestation is the only Carbon Dioxide Removal option required, neither fossil fuels with Carbon Capture and Storage nor Bioenergy with Carbon Capture and Storage are used. This scenario envisages 58 per cent reductions in CO₂ emissions by 2030 and major decline in the share of coal in the energy mix, but commensurate increase in the use of nuclear as well as renewable energy in electricity production. Reducing methane emissions from agriculture is also an important part of this scenario. The first scenario has strong focus on ambitious CO₂ emissions reductions during the decade of action with no Carbon Capture and Storage till 2100.
29. The *second scenario* has broad focus on sustainability including energy intensity, human development, economic convergence and international cooperation, along with notable shift towards sustainable and healthy consumption patterns, low-carbon technology innovation, and well-managed land systems with limited societal acceptability for Bioenergy with Carbon Capture and Storage. This scenario is slightly less ambitious than the first one in terms of the speed of CO₂ emissions reductions during the decade of action but relies to greater extent on decreased methane emissions in the agricultural sector. The second scenario envisages 47 per cent reductions in CO₂ emissions by 2030 and 61 per cent decline in the share of coal in the energy mix, but commensurate increase in the use of nuclear as well as renewable energy in electricity production.
30. The *third scenario* assumes that societal as well as technological developments follow historical patterns. Emission reductions are mainly achieved by changing the way in which energy and products are produced, and to a lesser degree by reducing demand. This scenario is based on a slower speed of CO₂ emissions reductions during the decade of action, compared to the first two scenarios, or 41 per cent, a doubling in the use of nuclear energy and a 48 per cent increase in the use of renewables in electricity production, along with very heavy reliance on the use of Carbon Capture and Storage as means to remove CO₂ from the atmosphere from 2050 onwards.

31. The *fourth scenario* is resource- and energy-intensive in which economic growth and globalization lead to widespread adoption of greenhouse-gas-intensive lifestyles, including high demand for transportation fuels and livestock products. Emissions reductions are mainly achieved through technological means e.g. major use of Carbon Dioxide Removal from 2050 through the deployment of Bioenergy with Carbon Capture and Storage. This scenario, like the third one, is based on a major shift towards the use of nuclear as primary energy source, particularly after 2030, along with heavy reliance on Carbon Capture and Storage. This is the only scenario where CO₂ emissions are projected to increase by 2030, or 4 per cent. Primary energy from coal at the same time is expected to decline by 59 per cent in this scenario but the use of nuclear energy would increase by 106 per cent, also by 2030. The share of renewable energy in electricity production is also expected to grow at a much slower rate in the fourth scenario than the others, or 25 per cent by 2030. In addition, the agricultural sector is projected to increase methane emissions by 14 per cent by 2030, a major departure from the first two scenarios.
32. According to the 2018 Special Report, current pathways based on the full implementation of the Nationally-Determined Contributions (NDC) of the Parties to the Paris Agreement, will not limit global warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius even if supplemented by very substantial increases in the scale and ambition of emissions reductions after 2030. The current global emissions trajectory thus increases the risk of a considerable overshoot over the 1.5 degrees C target by 2050 and in fact take the world on a very dangerous path with average temperature rises likely to surpass 3.5C by the end of the century.
33. Carbon Capture and Storage technologies, although theoretically promising, have not yet been proven to work at scale and risk being less practical, effective, or economical than anticipated. There is also risk that the use of CO₂ removal technologies may end up competing with agriculture, human settlements and natural habitats for land and water, which could adversely affect sustainable development. This implies that global anthropogenic CO₂ emissions need to start declining now and to fall by at least 45 per cent by 2030 from the 2010 level in order to achieve zero net emissions by 2050. Ambitious and immediate climate action (scenarios 1 and 2), is therefore the only viable pathway to limit climate change to 1.5 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels and protect people, livelihoods and natural ecosystems, but also help ensure more sustainable and equitable societies.
34. The economic argument for pursuing ambitious climate action is equally powerful. The literature is rich in studies that illustrate the net benefits of pursuing aggressive decarbonization and resilience-building strategies for local communities, businesses, cities, and countries alike. For instance, according to a Stanford University study, limiting climate change to 1.5 degrees rather than 2 degrees Celsius may save the global economy tens of trillions of US dollars, with the benefits far exceeding the costs of achieving this global target.⁹ By contrast, an increase in average global temperature from 1.5 to 2 degrees Celsius could result in cumulative economic losses amounting to some \$30 trillion by the end of the century. In the *Global Renewables Outlook 2020* report, the International Renewable Energy Agency (IRENA) found that transforming the energy system by investing and deploying renewable energy sources at scale could boost cumulative global GDP gains above business-as-usual by USD 98 trillion between now and 2050 and would nearly quadruple renewable energy jobs to 42 million in this sector alone¹⁰.
35. Today the world is not on track achieve a 1.5 degrees Celsius pathway. All countries, particularly the largest emitters, need to deliver on their existing commitments under the Paris Agreement and urgently scale-up nationally-determined contributions; develop strategies to reach net zero emissions by 2050; commit to a comprehensive programme of support for climate adaptation and resilience; and ensure sufficient financing for a sustainable, just and green economy. This low-carbon transition will require a whole-of-society approach and will imply structural transformations in several, if not most, sectors of the economy. The post-Covid19 recovery effort offers an unprecedented and likely unique window to mobilize and channel the necessary investments to achieve this vision and “recover better”.

⁹ Burke, M., Davis, W. Matthew, Diffenbaugh, N. S., Large potential reduction in economic damages under UN mitigation targets, *Nature*, Volume 557, May 2018.

¹⁰ *Global Renewables Outlook*, IRENA 2020

III. Mobilizing the support of the United Nations system for the decade of action

36. Prior to the COVID-19 crisis, consultations with Member States and United Nations entities had been undertaken on how the United Nations can best support accelerated implementation of the SDGs during the decade of action. These consultations highlighted the importance of strengthening mobilization, ambition and solutions as well as amplifying the support of the UN system around three key challenges: (a) eradicating poverty and reducing inequality, (b) driving climate action and supporting a healthy planet, and (c) achieving gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls. The effective execution of the Secretary-General's strategy and roadmap on financing the 2030 Agenda, as well as the ongoing reforms of the UN development system, will permeate the UN's response.
37. This report catalogues the challenges and opportunities relating to addressing poverty and driving climate action, but 2020 is also a crucial year for Gender Equality as the world marks the 25th anniversary of the Beijing Declaration and its Platform for Action. Together, these instruments define the most comprehensive and transformative global agenda for gender equality and women's empowerment. The vision of Beijing has been only partly realized. Women in parliaments are still outnumbered three-to-one by men, women still earn just 77 cents for every dollar earned by men, and unpaid care and domestic work remain stubbornly feminized the world over. In some areas, progress towards gender equality has stalled or even gone into reverse. Some countries have rolled back laws that protect women from violence; others are reducing civic space; still others are pursuing economic and immigration policies that indirectly discriminate against women. Women's access to sexual and reproductive health services is far from universal.
38. With nations around the world searching for solutions to the complex challenges of our age, one way to get us on track to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals is to accelerate the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action. These past 25 years have seen growing, strengthened, vibrant, transnational and diverse women's movements that are increasingly challenging slow and piecemeal progress by calling for urgent systemic change. They are advancing gender equality and demanding accountability from governments and other powerful actors, and will be at the very center of our efforts to achieve tangible results on gender equality during the Decade of Action.
39. In addition, the United Nations is currently doing everything possible to support countries in responding to the health and other socio-economic implications of COVID-19. To help ensure that the UN system is well-prepared to support countries in addressing the impact of the pandemic, a COVID-19 Preparedness and Response Plan, a Global Humanitarian Appeal and a UN Response and Recovery Fund have been launched. The UN Sustainable Development Group has also developed a system-wide framework to guide the work of the UN's 131 Country Teams for the immediate socio-economic response to COVID-19.
40. As we move forward, all assets of the UN system will be activated to advance the Decade of Action. At the country level, the UN resident coordinators are now better positioned to expand the provision of integrated policy and programmatic support to national governments for SDG implementation and climate action. Governments can also call upon the UN system in the design of transformative pathways and resource mobilization strategies to accelerate SDG implementation at the country level. This includes support to countries in the design of their enhanced, quality NDCs and their long-term decarbonization and adaptation strategies. The UN system, furthermore, will work closely with governments in the generation of high-quality SDG statistics; in outreach and advocacy efforts; and by actively mobilizing the engagement of local authorities and the private sector in the SDG implementation process.
41. At the regional level, the Secretary-General's proposals to strengthen the regional architecture of the UN system aim to help make the UN system more effective and responsive in supporting SDG implementation and climate action. And at the global level, the UN system can provide wide-ranging support to Member States to accelerate the implementation of the SDGs in areas such as engagement with intergovernmental bodies, data, analysis, standards and rule-setting, thought leadership, public engagement, outreach and

advocacy and partnership-building. The UN system can work with Member States and other actors in raising the level of ambition and the impact of the outcomes of major upcoming intergovernmental processes in important areas such as oceans, sustainable transport, sustainable energy, gender equity, climate change and biodiversity. The UN system through higher quality technical support can enhance the ability of key intergovernmental bodies such as the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development to monitor and accelerate SDG implementation.

IV. Conclusion

42. The annual SDG Moment to be organized by the Secretary-General in the context of the General Debate of the General Assembly, building on the HLPF, offers an opportunity to generate momentum among all stakeholders for a recovery that moves us closer to inclusive, resilient and sustainable societies, as a launchpad for the decade of action to deliver the SDGs.
43. The SDG Summit reaffirmed that the Goals can be achieved by 2030 if the speed and level of ambition is stepped-up during the decade of action. This will require Member States to renew the spirit of cooperation and multilateralism that characterized the adoption of the 2030 Agenda and the Paris Agreement on Climate Change. Countries also need to actively leverage the capacity, commitment and energy of youth and civil society, businesses and the scientific community when accelerating the SDG implementation process.
44. The COVID-19 outbreak underscores how interconnected the world has become and why cooperation among States is now more important than ever. An effective response to this global pandemic requires countries to intensify cross-border cooperation in areas such as procurement of health equipment, vaccines, treatments and exchange of lessons learned along with commitment to coordinate economic policymaking. The COVID-19 outbreak should not be an excuse to weaken multilateralism, but rather serve as a reminder that international cooperation is in need of further strengthening.
45. This report makes the following recommendations as Member States embark on a decisive decade of action and delivery for sustainable development:
 - (a) The COVID-19 outbreak has reaffirmed the need to strengthen multilateral cooperation and governance to deal with global emergencies in areas, such as health or climate change. The fast-spreading character of COVID-19 and similar pandemics requires strong functional capacity at the global level to effectively and efficiently coordinate the actions of States. In this context it is important to reflect on the changes required for the United Nations to play such a coordinating role. The COVID-19 pandemic also highlights the need for stronger and more resilient public health and emergency response systems, particularly in developing countries.
 - (b) The spirit of solidarity and cooperation that has characterized the international response to the COVID-19 pandemic needs to be extended to the implementation of the SDGs including the climate emergency, particularly at the country level where governments can promote a whole-of-society approach by mobilizing all stakeholders in the identification of high-impact transformative pathways that capitalize on synergy across multiple sectors simultaneously.
 - (c) Reducing income inequality in society must become a key strategy to eradicate extreme poverty by 2030. The pledge to leave no one behind will remain an aspiration only, unless societies decide to tackle the challenge of inequality head-on.
 - (d) Member States need to commit to rapid and sustained CO₂ emissions reductions during the decade of action in order to achieve zero net emissions by 2050 and limit global warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius. This will require 45 per cent reductions in global CO₂ emissions by 2030. In parallel, Member States need to design and implement adaptation strategies to cope with the unavoidable impacts of climate change and protect their communities.
 - (e) The United Nations system has a critical role to play in enabling countries to achieve the SDGs by 2030. This will call for strong commitment of all UN entities to common approaches in SDG planning, programming and implementation and effective partnership between the UN system and Member States at all levels.