



HIGH-LEVEL POLITICAL FORUM ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

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7 to 16 July 2020

Frequently Asked Questions – *For the Press*

What is the High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development?

- The Forum is the central platform for taking stock of the progress on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the 17 Sustainable Development Goals ([SDGs](#)), which were adopted by world leaders in September 2015.
- It is an annual high-level event which provides an opportunity for countries to exchange experiences and share plans with regard to the implementation of the agenda, identifying gaps, lessons learned and providing policy recommendations.
- The HLPF represents the best avenue for rallying further action to achieve the Goals by 2030 as we rebuild more resilient and prosperous societies following the devastating socio-economic impacts of COVID-19.
- The Forum seeks to address, in a cohesive and integrated manner, the economic, social and environmental dimensions of sustainable development.
- The Forum also provides a platform for the creation of multi-stakeholder partnerships and the promotion of international cooperation as we advance towards achieving the SDGs.

Why is the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development important?

- The Forum is the key UN platform for reviewing implementation of the 2030 agenda. This year it is especially important because it will be the first major UN meeting to review the impact of COVID-19 on the SDGs; to discuss how to respond to the impacts of the pandemic; and how to build back better and ensure that our response to COVID 19 puts us back on track for accelerated implementation of the 2030 agenda during the decade of action.
- The Forum serves as a global hub for governments, UN system organizations, intergovernmental bodies and the major groups and other stakeholders to share plans, exchange ideas and best practices and review progress on the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs.
- By providing political leadership, guidance and recommendations, it enables countries to accelerate progress towards achieving the goals and targets.



Accelerated action and transformative pathways: realizing the decade of action and delivery for sustainable development



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- A central feature of the Forum is the Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs) that Member States present which showcase their work on the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the achievement of the SDGs.
- The Forum provides an opportunity for countries, civil society and businesses to highlight the actions they are taking to achieve the SDGs and helps ensure that the SDGs remain relevant and ambitious.

Why is this year's Forum of particular significance?

- This Forum takes place at a time when there has been increasing recognition that efforts must be scaled up worldwide if we are to achieve the SDGs by 2030. The UN Secretary-General launched the Decade of Action and delivery for SDG Implementation in January 2020 to respond to the urgent need to get the SDGs back on track.
- The SDGs celebrates five years. This milestone presents a chance to look at what progress has been made since the SDGs were adopted in 2015 and determine what actions are needed in the next 10 years.
- COVID-19 has imperiled progress on the 17 Goals. Health systems have been overwhelmed, unemployment has risen and it is expected that tens of millions of people will be pushed back into extreme poverty. The Forum is now more important than ever as the international community comes together this year to determine a way to recover from the pandemic and build better to ensure that the SDGs are achieved.

What are the Sustainable Development Goals?

- Five years ago, when member states adopted the SDGs, countries embarked on a journey to achieve a bold, ambitious and historic agenda to promote prosperity while protecting the environment.
- The SDGs—a core feature of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development—reflect a new understanding that development everywhere must integrate economic growth, social well-being and environmental protection.
- The list of the 17 SDGs, which contain 169 targets, can be found at <https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/sustainable-development-goals/>
- The SDGs offer the most practical and effective pathway to address the causes of violent conflict, human rights abuses, climate change and environmental degradation



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How will the SDGs be achieved?

- Governments have the primary responsibility for follow-up and review, at the national, regional and global levels, in relation to the progress made in implementing the SDGs. The achievement of SDGs also needs the efforts of whole society with contributions by all stakeholders in strong partnerships.
- The successful implementation of the SDGs relies on countries' sustainable development policies, plans and programmes, and are led by countries. It also needs an enabling environment of international cooperation and solidarity.
- Governments continue to develop national indicators to assist in monitoring progress made on the goals and targets, taking into account the global indicator framework.
- The mobilization of resources at both the domestic and international levels is essential to achieve the goals.
- The follow-up and review process at the global level is undertaken by the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development and supported by an annual SDGs Report that is prepared by the United Nations Secretary-General.
- The Decade of Action is an opportunity to set the SDGs back on track and calls on governments, businesses, civil society and individuals to urgently scale up action through leadership, innovation, finance and collaboration to achieve the Goals by 2030.

In the five years since the SDGs were adopted, what actions has the international community taken to achieve the Goals?

- Governments from both developed and developing countries have aligned the SDGs with national policies and strategies, taken concrete actions, measures and initiatives on advancing various SDGs in line with the national priorities, reaching out to communities and stakeholders and have established partnerships, conducting seminars and conferences to raise awareness and catalyze action among civil society, businesses, academia, media and other groups.
- Businesses have integrated the SDGs into their companies' practices and invested in new technologies.
- Examples of concrete actions and initiatives by governments and other stakeholders to accelerate SDG implementation can be found online at:



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<https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/sdgactions> - have been registered at <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/sdgactions>

Has there been progress in achieving the SDGs?

The COVID-19 pandemic presents a major setback in the advancement of the SDGs. This happens when the world was already not fully on track to achieve the SDGs by 2030:

- The proportion of children under 5 years suffering from chronic undernutrition, or stunting, decreased from 23.1% in 2015 to 21.3% in 2019.
- The primary school completion rate reached 84% in 2018, up from 70% in 2000 and under current trends, is expected to reach 89% globally by 2030.
- As of 1 January 2020, women's representation in national parliaments (lower chamber and unicameral parliaments) reached 24.9%, up slightly from 22.3% in 2015.
- Access to clean cooking fuels and technologies increased to 63% in 2018, from 60% in 2015 and 56% in 2010.

Where have there been setbacks?

- The COVID-19 pandemic is expected to push tens of millions of people back into extreme poverty.
- An estimated 26.4% of the world population—about 2 billion people – were affected by moderate or severe food insecurity in 2018, an increase from 23.2% in 2014, mainly due to increases in sub-Saharan Africa and Latin America.
- In 2019, the global unemployment rate stood at 5%, with the highest rate, at 11%, in Northern Africa and Western Asia. The unemployment rate was considerably higher among young workers than among adults in all regions in 2019.
- Global foreign direct investment (FDI) flows continued their slide in 2018, falling by 13% to \$1.3 trillion from a revised \$1.5 trillion in 2017.
- Global climate finance saw a 17% increase from 2013–2014 (\$584 billion) to 2015–2016 (\$681 billion). investments in climate activities tracked across sectors were still surpassed by those related to fossil fuels in the energy sector alone (\$781 billion in 2016).

How does the Forum guide progress on the SDGs?



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- The Forum allows for a participatory and transparent follow-up and review framework at the global level that will help countries to maximize and track progress in implementing the Goals to ensure that no one is left behind.
- At the Forum, countries present the progress they have made and the obstacles they face in implementing the Goals. This year, countries are expected to share the impact of COVID-19 as well as the lessons they have learnt in the context of implementing the sustainable development agenda.
- The Forum helps translate the vision of the Goals into reality by providing political leadership and recommendations and sharing experiences and lessons learned.
- The Forum brings together Member States, UN system, civil society, NGOs, the private sector and other stakeholders to discuss progress and review successes.
- The Forum creates an opportunity to showcase and develop multi-stakeholder partnerships around the SDGs.
- The Forum results in the Ministerial Declaration which provides political guidance on the way forward for advancing the 2030 Agenda and SDGs.

What will be the focus and format of the Forum this year?

- This year's Forum, which takes place virtually on [UN Web TV](#) between 7-16 July, has as its theme, "Accelerated actions and transformative pathways: realizing the decade of action and delivery for sustainable development".
- The Decade of Action on SDG Implementation by 2030 was launched by the UN Secretary-General in January 2020 and highlights the need for more urgent action in the next ten years to ensure we achieve all 17 Goals.
- The 2020 Sustainable Development Goals Report will be launched at the Forum, presenting new data and underscoring the need for further action to ensure we achieve the Goals by the 2030 deadline.

Who will be attending the virtual Forum?

- Ministers and other high-level representatives from both developed and developing countries will present their national plans (reviews) for implementing the SDGs in a virtual format.
- A large number of world leading experts and voices, including the UN special envoys, economists, environment scientists, and social activists will join the meeting as resource persons to present their visions and views on the impact of COVID-19 to SDGs and the way forward.



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- UN system organizations, intergovernmental organizations at the international and regional levels, civil society, the private sector, academia and other stakeholders will also be part of the virtual meetings and provide major inputs.

Which countries are presenting their reviews this year?

- This year, 47 countries, both developed and developing, will be presenting their voluntary reviews. They are: Argentina, Armenia, Austria, Bangladesh, Barbados, Benin, Brunei Darussalam, Bulgaria, Burundi, Comoros, Costa Rica, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ecuador, Estonia, Finland, the Republic of the Gambia, Georgia, Honduras, India, Kenya, Kyrgyzstan, Liberia, Libya, Malawi, Federated States of Micronesia, Morocco, Mozambique, Nepal, Niger, Nigeria, Panama, Papua New Guinea, Peru, Republic of Moldova, Republic of North Macedonia, Russian Federation, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Samoa, Seychelles, Slovenia, Solomon Islands, Syrian Arab Republic, Trinidad and Tobago, Uganda, Ukraine, Uzbekistan and Zambia.
- Their reviews may be found at <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/hlpf/2020#vnrs>

How many countries have presented their review up to this date?

- Since 2016 which marks the first time countries presented their plans to achieve the SDGs, approximately 158 plans have been presented.
- In 2020, 47 countries will present their reviews: 26 first time presenters, 20 second time presenters and 1 third time presenter.

Why are these reviews significant?

- These reviews are voluntary and demonstrate the commitment of the international community to mobilize efforts towards achieving the Goals.
- Reviews by countries at the Forum provide the opportunity to mobilize support to overcome shared challenges, identify new and emerging issues and provide recommendations for implementing the Goals.
- The presentation of reviews is a peer learning experience and can spur further action to implement the SDGs.
- Success in achieving the SDGs will help to address some of the most pressing global challenges, such as climate change, providing a better life for women and men and building a firm foundation for stability and peace in all societies, everywhere.



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What is sustainable development?

- Sustainable development seeks to meet the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. Sustainable development calls for concerted efforts towards building an inclusive, sustainable and resilient future for people and planet.
- Ending poverty, reducing inequalities and combatting climate change are indispensable requirements for the achievement of sustainable development.
- The 2030 Agenda addresses the interlinkages between the social, economic, and environmental dimensions of sustainable development, since a holistic approach that incorporates these three elements is essential if we are to achieve sustainable development.



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