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### Sustainable development

## **Towards the achievement of sustainable development: implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, including through sustainable consumption and production, building on Agenda 21**

### **Report of the Secretary-General**

#### *Summary*

The present report, submitted pursuant to General Assembly resolution [74/216](#), provides an update on the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, building on issues included in Agenda 21 and focusing on the state of play with regard to sustainable consumption and production. The report is based on recent studies, reports, analysis and inputs by the United Nations system, the outcomes of intergovernmental deliberations, including the online meeting of the high-level political forum on sustainable development convened under the auspices of the Economic and Social Council, a series of webinars and online discussions on science, technology and innovation for the Sustainable Development Goals and other relevant forums and discussions. The present report should be read in conjunction with other reports on sustainable development submitted to the Assembly, including the report of the Secretary-General on progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals ([E/2020/57](#)), the note by the Secretary-General on financing for sustainable development ([E/FFDF/2020/2](#)) and the note by the Secretary-General transmitting the progress report on the 10-Year Framework of Programmes on Sustainable Consumption and Production Patterns ([E/2020/56](#)).

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\* [A/75/150](#).



## I. Introduction

1. In its resolution 74/216, the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to submit to the Assembly at its seventy-fifth session a report on the implementation of the resolution, with a particular focus on the state of play with regard to sustainable consumption and production and the application and promotion thereof, and to recommend concrete actions to implement the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in that regard.

## II. Agenda 21, the Programme for the Further Implementation of Agenda 21 and the outcomes of the World Summit on Sustainable Development and of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development and remaining challenges: unfinished business

2. Since the convening in 1992 of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, the unfinished items of Agenda 21 are now being carried forward under the 2030 Agenda. Today, the global landscape continues to offer a mixed picture of accomplishments and setbacks and the economic and financial shocks associated with the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic are derailing the already slow economic growth.<sup>1</sup>

3. The devastating COVID-19 pandemic has paralysed large parts of the global economy, sharply restricting economic activities. Against this background, and according to the report entitled *World Economic Situation and Prospects as of Mid-2020*, the world economy is projected to shrink by 3.2 per cent in 2020, with only a gradual recovery of lost output projected for 2021. Under the baseline scenario, gross domestic product (GDP) growth in developed countries will plunge to -5.0 per cent in 2020, while output of developing countries will shrink by 0.7 per cent.

4. The report also indicates that the pandemic has exacerbated poverty and inequality and will likely cause an estimated 34.3 million people to fall below the extreme poverty line in 2020, with an additional 130 million people possibly joining the ranks of those living in extreme poverty by 2030, dealing a huge blow to global efforts to eradicate extreme poverty and hunger. Progress to achieve food security has stalled with the number of people suffering from hunger increasing in the past three years, from 785 million in 2015 to over 821 million in 2018, and the COVID-19 pandemic has amplified all those threats, worsening global poverty and hunger. Progress in many health areas continues, but the rate of improvement has slowed down and will not be sufficient to meet most of the health-related targets as the COVID-19 pandemic is devastating health systems globally and threatens already achieved health outcomes (see E/2020/57, para. 20).

5. At the end of 2019, millions of children and youth were still out of school and more than half of those in school were not meeting minimum proficiency standards in reading and numeracy.<sup>2</sup> School closures to stop the spread of COVID-19 are having an adverse impact on learning outcomes and social and behavioural development on over 90 per cent of the world's student population, equivalent to 1.6 billion children and youth. The digital divide will widen existing education equality gaps, a far cry from the goal of ensuring inclusive and equitable quality education for all by 2030.

<sup>1</sup> See the policy briefs of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the Secretariat on the impact of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) on the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals. Available at <https://www.un.org/development/desa/en/covid-19.html>.

<sup>2</sup> See <https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/report/2019/goal-04/>.

Structural barriers and discrimination are still faced by women and girls all over the world and reports from several countries also suggest that domestic violence against women and children is rising during the global lockdown.

6. The COVID-19 pandemic has demonstrated the critical importance of sanitation, hygiene and adequate access to clean water for preventing and containing diseases. Yet billions of people continue to lack access to safe drinking water and basic sanitation, with women and girls disproportionately impacted.

7. Energy access policies continue to bear fruit, with 2018 data showing promising signs. The number of people without access to electricity dropped from almost 1 billion in 2017 to 860 million, a record in recent years. Despite significant steps, however, close to 600 million people are still without access to electricity in sub-Saharan Africa.<sup>3</sup>

8. Although the world's unemployment rate dropped below 5 per cent in 2019, many workers continued to have low-quality jobs, in particular workers in the informal sector, women and young people. Small and medium-sized enterprises, workers in informal employment, the self-employed, daily wage earners and workers in sectors at the highest risk of disruption have been hit the hardest by the pandemic (see [E/2020/57](#), para. 73). The International Labour Organization (ILO) estimates that full or partial lockdown measures are currently affecting about 2.7 billion workers, representing around 81 per cent of the world's workforce.<sup>4</sup>

9. Last year, 2019, was the second warmest year on record and the end of the warmest decade (2010–2019) ever recorded, with carbon dioxide levels and other greenhouse gases in the atmosphere rising to new records. In its recent special report entitled *The Ocean and Cryosphere in a Changing Climate*, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change cautioned that climate change was heating the oceans and altering their chemistry so dramatically that it was threatening seafood supplies, fuelling cyclones and floods, and posing profound risks to the hundreds of millions of people living along the coasts. Ocean acidification and unsustainable fishing continue to pose major threats to the ocean and marine resources. Current efforts to protect key marine environments, small-scale fishers and investment in ocean science are not yet meeting the urgent needs to protect this vast, fragile resource. Overall, the progress made to date towards the conservation and sustainable use of the oceans, seas and marine resources is insufficient (see [A/74/630](#), para. 7). Land degradation continues and biodiversity loss is occurring at an alarming rate (see [E/2019/68](#), para. 36), with 1 million animal and plant species at risk of extinction.<sup>5</sup>

10. In 2019, conflicts and disasters triggered 33.4 million new internal displacements across 145 countries. Conflicts and violence caused 8.5 million new displacements in 50 countries. There is an urgent need to renew efforts to promote peaceful and inclusive societies, strengthen institutions and provide access to justice. Moreover, owing to climate change, in 2019 an additional 24.9 million people across 140 countries were displaced by around 1,900 disasters, the highest figure recorded since 2012.<sup>6</sup>

11. According to the *World Economic Situation and Prospects as of Mid-2020*, it is expected that in addition to falling domestic demand, developing countries will see

<sup>3</sup> International Energy Agency, *SDG7: Data and Projections* (Paris, 2019).

<sup>4</sup> International Labour Organization (ILO), "ILO Monitor: COVID-19 and the world of work", 2nd ed., 7 April 2020.

<sup>5</sup> Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES), Eduardo S. Brondizio and others, eds., *Global Assessment Report on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services* (IPBES secretariat, Bonn, Germany, 2019).

<sup>6</sup> Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre, *Global Report on Internal Displacement* (Geneva, April 2020).

sharp declines in export revenues, remittances, foreign direct investment, and official development assistance, which accounted for more than a quarter of GDP before the crisis. In its *Financing for Sustainable Development Report, 2020*, the Inter-agency Task Force on Financing for Development indicates that 44 per cent of low-income and least developed countries are currently at high risk or in debt distress, representing a doubling of debt risk in under five years. In addition, protectionism and trade restrictions are increasing. The COVID-19 crisis compounds the impact of these restrictions and significantly disrupts trade in goods and services. The crisis equally disrupts global value chains, with merchandise exports expected to fall by a minimum of \$50 billion. This state of affairs severely affects the means of implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

## A. Follow-up and review of the 2030 Agenda

12. The sections below highlight some of the key mechanisms and activities that support the implementation the 2030 Agenda, including the high-level political forum on sustainable development. The high-level political forum was held from 7 to 17 July 2020, under the auspices of the Economic and Social Council, on the theme “Accelerated action and transformative pathways: realizing the decade of action and delivery for sustainable development”. Participants at the high-level political forum debated about where the global community stood on the Sustainable Development Goals in the light of the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. They reflected on how the international community could respond to the pandemic in a way that put the world back on track to achieve the Goals and accelerate progress during the decade of action and delivery for sustainable development. In the light of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic and the expected limitations on in-person meetings and international travel, the Bureau of the Economic and Social Council made adjustments to the format and programme of the high-level political forum in 2020. All meetings were held online, including all side and special events.

13. The five regional commissions represent the regional platforms for assessing progress and exchanging knowledge, best practices and solutions in support of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, in line with regional priorities and specificities and provide support to countries in preparation of their voluntary national reviews. The regional commissions hold their forum for sustainable development annually and present their outcomes to the high-level political forum.

14. In 2020 the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) launched the “Sustainable Development Goals Gateway”, an inter-agency regional knowledge platform for the Goals, which allows countries and United Nations country teams to obtain specialized knowledge, respond to emerging national needs related to the 2030 Agenda and facilitate the monitoring and statistical follow-up of the progress made against the Goals, both at the regional and country levels. In view of the current COVID-19 pandemic, ECLAC postponed its fourth Forum of the Countries of Latin America and the Caribbean on Sustainable Development.

15. The sixth session of the Africa Regional Forum on Sustainable Development, organized by the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), was held in Victoria Falls, Zimbabwe from 24 to 27 February 2020. Its overarching message was that Africa is not on track to achieve the Goals, but that the decade 2020–2030 would provide a window of opportunity for decisive and accelerated action on a continental scale to achieve the Goals and the corresponding goals of Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want.

16. Owing to the coronavirus pandemic, the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) organized its seventh Asia-Pacific Forum on

Sustainable Development on 20 May 2020 as a one-day online meeting. Good progress was reported both on institutionalization and on strengthening the capabilities of institutions to work on integrated solutions, and on recognizing the importance of involving businesses, civil society and science institutions in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. However, the COVID-19 pandemic may have profound and negative effects on efforts in the region.

17. The fourth session of the Regional Forum on Sustainable Development for the Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) region was held on 19 March 2020 as a one-day online meeting. In its report, the Forum indicates that in Europe, no country is on track to achieve the Goals as the region faces considerable challenges, in particular on climate action, life below water and life on land (Goals 13, 14 and 15).

18. Owing to the pandemic, the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) postponed the seventh session of the Arab Regional Forum for Sustainable Development. The Forum is currently scheduled to be held during the third quarter of 2020.

## **B. Sustainable consumption and production**

19. The unsustainable practices of consumption and production that prevail today are key drivers of the three major environmental crises currently facing the world: climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution.

20. There is a broad consensus around the imperative to shift to sustainable consumption and production. From 2017 to 2019, 79 countries and the European Union reported on at least one national policy instrument that contributed to the implementation of the 10-Year Framework of Programmes on Sustainable Consumption and Production Patterns.<sup>7</sup> Nevertheless, indicators under targets 12.2 and 8.4 of the Goals on the material footprint (materials extracted throughout global supply chains to meet the importing country's demand) and on domestic material consumption continue to rise at the global level and are projected to increase significantly in the long term.<sup>8</sup> In addition, trends also show that the rate at which materials are being extracted globally is outpacing both population and economic growth.<sup>9</sup> In a business as usual scenario, GDP will continue to grow at an average rate of 2.2 per cent per year to reach \$216 trillion by 2060, which would require a 110 per cent increase in global resource extraction (to 190 billion tons).<sup>10</sup> The pandemic offers countries an opportunity to build a recovery plan that will reverse current trends and change consumption and production patterns towards a sustainable future.

### **Opportunities to accelerate action and achieve transformative pathways**

21. Reversing the negative trend of related to Goal 12 requires transforming the use and management of natural resources in socioeconomic systems by addressing the drivers of unsustainable consumption and production while putting in place the building blocks for new alternatives to take root. Opportunities to accelerate action and achieve transformative pathways have been identified in sectors that are resource-intensive and/or have high material footprint, such as agriculture, food and

<sup>7</sup> See <https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/report/2020/goal-12/>.

<sup>8</sup> Independent Group of Scientists appointed by the Secretary-General, *Global Sustainable Development Report 2019: the Future is Now – Science for Achieving Sustainable Development* (New York, United Nations, 2019).

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> Bruno Oberle and others, *Global Resources Outlook 2019: Natural Resources for the Future We Want* (Nairobi, International Resource Panel and United Nations Environment Programme, 2019).

construction. These sectors accounted for nearly 70 per cent of the world's total material footprint in 2015 and thus are key levers for change and make it possible to prioritize and contextualize recommended measures through sectors and hotspots of key value chains. Changing not only the way in which we produce and consume food but also how we build, including through use of digital and other technologies, will both have the potential to be real game changers on resource use and beyond.

22. The food sector is a dominant user of natural resources globally.<sup>11</sup> With an estimated 50 per cent increase in food production by 2050 and in the context of a finite and shrinking resource base, food systems will need to deliver increased productivity while utilizing natural resources in a sustainable manner.<sup>12</sup> Food systems need to include efficiencies along the whole food chain and promote sustainable practices and diets.<sup>13</sup> This includes reducing food loss and waste, which will require new technologies in harvesting, transportation and storage, as well as enhanced trade patterns and changes in consumer behaviour.<sup>14</sup>

23. Developing agro-industrial value chains to diversify and better integrate small-scale agriculture into markets also opens up income-generating opportunities for small-scale producers, which can potentially reduce poverty and food insecurity. Furthermore, information and communications technologies (ICTs) can also opening great opportunities to develop solutions and digital marketplaces to connect farmers to markets more easily, provide validated extension information and improve agricultural value chains. The inclusion of ICTs can gradually create additional livelihood opportunities for smallholder farmers and empower them to contribute to the development of rural areas in their countries, including both women and youth.

24. The building sector consumes 12 per cent of freshwater and 30 per cent of raw material and generates as much as 40 per cent of landfill waste globally. With the building stock set to double by 2050, emissions, energy and resource consumption of the sector are set to increase. However, many solutions exist to implement resource efficiency in this sector and these can generate multiple benefits. For example, greenhouse gas emissions from the material cycle of residential buildings in the Group of 7 and China could be reduced by at least 80 per cent in 2050 through a set of material efficiency strategies.<sup>15</sup> Furthermore, the world needs more than \$40 trillion in new and upgraded infrastructure between 2005 and 2030, much of this investment will be directed to cities in developing countries;<sup>16</sup> this presents a substantial opportunity to build more resource efficient and sustainable infrastructure.

25. In addition to targeting sectors that are resource-intensive, it is fundamental that in addressing targets 12.2 and 8.4 of the Goals that countries consider not only their production footprint, but also their consumption levels and their related consumption footprints along global value chains. The circular economy provides a conceptual and policy framework that seeks to minimize the use of resources and the creation of waste by encouraging recycling and reuse. This can have policy implications, particularly for solving pollution from plastics, as the link between plastic waste and

<sup>11</sup> International Resource Panel, *Food Systems and Natural Resources* (UNEP, 2016).

<sup>12</sup> Food and Agriculture Organization, *The Future of Food and Agriculture – Trends and Challenges* (Rome, 2017).

<sup>13</sup> Marina Bortoletti and James Lomax, *Collaborative Framework for Food Systems Transformation: A Multi-stakeholder Pathway* (UNEP, 2019).

<sup>14</sup> Julian Parfitt, Mark Barthel and Sarah Macnaughton, "Food waste within food supply chains: quantification and potential for change to 2050", *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society B*, vol. 365, No. 1554 (September 2010).

<sup>15</sup> Edgar Hertwich and others, *Resource Efficiency And Climate Change: Material Efficiency Strategies for a Low-Carbon Future – Summary for Policymakers* (Nairobi, International Resource Panel and UNEP, 2020).

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

sustainable consumption and production patterns is acknowledged, and many efforts are encouraged at all levels to reduce, reuse and recycle plastics and address through innovative approaches different types of plastic waste, including marine plastic litter (see General Assembly resolution 74/216, para. 11).

26. Plastics have become one of the most ubiquitous materials used globally. The pollution they cause has emerged as the second biggest threat to the global environment after climate change. Since 1950, global plastics production has increased dramatically with an annual yearly increase of around 9 per cent between 1950 and 2015;<sup>17</sup> the annual production of plastic increased from 1.7 million metric tons in 1950 to 322 million metric tons in 2015,<sup>18</sup> and more than 8 billion tons of plastic have accumulated on Earth.<sup>19</sup> However, only approximately 9 per cent of global plastic waste is recycled and 12 per cent is incinerated. Moreover, most of the plastics produced so far are extremely durable and impossible to degrade in nature. Whether it is incinerated or disposed, plastic waste contaminates the surrounding environment and becomes a threat to all aquatic life forms when disposed in water. Much of the plastic waste has ended up in the oceans, with estimates ranging from 93 to 236 thousand metric tons floating in the oceans. According to a 2017 study, 83 per cent of tap water samples from across the world contained plastic pollutants. Plastics are also a major source of carbon dioxide emissions.

27. Technologies will also play a critical role in tackling the serious problem of pollution from plastics. New technologies, such as nanotechnology, genetic modification and advanced chemical processes, can contribute to reducing plastics by developing natural substitutes and producing more biodegradable ones. However, appropriate policies are needed to maximize the potential of new technologies and interventions at the production stage will have to be complemented by interventions at other stages of the plastics life cycle. Guided by a vision of more sustainable consumption and production and more circularity in the plastics value chain, Governments, business and other relevant stakeholders are being called upon to achieve a fundamental system shift in the plastics economy by eliminating the problematic and unnecessary plastics, innovating the plastics needed, retaining the highest value of the plastics used in the economy, and keeping them out of landfills and the environment, including oceans, rivers and land.

#### **United Nations development system's support for implementation of sustainable consumption and production**

28. Delivering on Goal 12 requires multi-stakeholder collaboration across Governments, local authorities, businesses, civil society, scientific organizations and the international system. The One Planet network was formed to implement the 10-Year Framework of Programmes on Sustainable Consumption and Production Patterns. The network is an operational partnership with more than 700 partners through which efforts in implementing Goal 12 can be strategically channelled. As a global, multi-stakeholder partnership comprising national and local governments, civil society, businesses, scientific and technical organizations and international organizations, it leads the shift to sustainable consumption and production by setting the agenda and raising awareness on the matter, and providing tools, knowledge and

<sup>17</sup> Michael Hauschild, Alexis Laurent and Morten W. Ryberg, *Mapping of Global Plastics Value Chain and Plastics Losses to the Environment: With a Particular Focus on Marine Environment* (UNEP, 2018).

<sup>18</sup> See figure 1 in "Global primary plastics production according to industrial use sector from 1950 to 2015 (million metric tons)", available at: [www.un.org/development/desa/dpad/wp-content/uploads/sites/45/ftq\\_3\\_sep2019\\_fig1.png](http://www.un.org/development/desa/dpad/wp-content/uploads/sites/45/ftq_3_sep2019_fig1.png).

<sup>19</sup> United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, "Frontier Technology Quarterly: frontier technologies for addressing plastic pollution", September 2019.



solutions to deliver on Goal 12. The network's "One Plan for One Planet" five-year strategy (2018–2022) offers a clear way forward on the shift to sustainable consumption and production, behind which the different stakeholders may rally.

29. Beyond the One Planet network, the United Nations development system also has a key role in supporting countries in delivering on the 2030 Agenda, in particular those that are lagging behind with regard to the Goals and are on a negative trend, including in the context of Goal 12. The United Nations system is actively assisting in strengthening national capacities and institutions and in supporting countries to create enabling environments based on preparedness and strong national capacities.

30. The programme on competition and consumer protection laws and policies of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) promotes sustainable consumption recognizing that informed consumers have an essential role in promoting consumption that is environmentally, economically and socially sustainable, including through the effects of their choices on products.<sup>20</sup> The UNCTAD programme on trade, environment and development promotes sustainable production through its BioTrade, Oceans Economy and Green Economy programmes. The UNCTAD BioTrade Initiative,<sup>21</sup> together with national and international partners, is creating an enabling environment for BioTrade businesses to enhance their capacities for sustainable sourcing, access and benefit sharing and trade in value-added products and services. The initiative contributes to supporting businesses in implementing sustainable production practices that generated over €5.1 billion in sales in 2019 and have enhanced the livelihoods of approximately 5 million people in over 60 countries.

31. Through its programme on fostering green exports through voluntary sustainability standards in developing countries,<sup>22</sup> and as the coordinating United Nations entity for the United Nations Forum on Sustainability Standards, UNCTAD promotes the use of voluntary sustainability standards as a market-driven tool that addresses key social, economic and environmental issues in production and processing. The standards provide incentives for producers to adopt sustainable production processes in response to increasing global demand for sustainable products. At the same time, as consumer-facing labels, they are effective in stimulating sustainable consumption among consumers. UNCTAD work on the standards assists smallholder producers and micro-businesses in developing countries to increase their understanding of the impact of voluntary sustainability standards on "green" exports and improve their capacity to jointly design, assess and implement policy options to leverage the standards to enhance levels of production and export of sustainable products. Finally, on the basis of the recommendations of the Intergovernmental Working Group of Experts on International Standards of Accounting and Reporting, UNCTAD has been assigned as a co-custodian on indicator 12.6.1. of the Goals, jointly with the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP).

32. The United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) has been very active in the achievement of Goal 12 and targets 12.2, 12.4, 12.5, and 12b of Goal 12. UNIDO is engaged in the production of new capacity-building tools aimed at strengthening the analytical skills of the Governments of member States in the area of sustainable production and consumption. UNIDO recently designed a tool for value chain analysis that enables analysts to better understand actual cost structures and profit margins of businesses along the value chain and, on this basis, develop new business models by introducing appropriate and sustainable technology and

<sup>20</sup> <https://unctad.org/en/Pages/DITC/CompetitionLaw/Competition-Law-and-Policy.aspx>.

<sup>21</sup> <http://www.biotrade.org/>.

<sup>22</sup> <https://unctad.org/en/Pages/DITC/Trade-Analysis/TAB-Project-1617AI.aspx>.



organizational schemes to reduce per unit costs, increase productivity and/or extend profits. UNIDO also designed and delivered capacity-building programmes in the field of the circular economy in 2017 and 2018, for example, in Bahrain, and in 2019 in Ferrara, Italy, for policymakers from Egypt, Morocco and Tunisia. The course helps policymakers to understand pathways to achieve resource efficient and zero waste economies from the sustainable production and consumption perspective.

33. Through the project on enhancing the quality of industrial policies, UNIDO has produced 12 capacity-building tools aimed at strengthening technical skills of government officials in developing countries in areas related to inclusive and sustainable industrial development. UNIDO contributes to the Partnership for Action on Green Economy, which includes knowledge creation and exchange through workshops, participation in conferences, promotion of an academic special issue about inclusive and sustainable industrial development and measurement,<sup>23</sup> and the production of specific indices. UNIDO has also produced modelling tools to monitor the social and economic impacts of technical cooperation projects on energy efficiency. With the World Bank, UNIDO produced research to show that the reduction of fossil fuel subsidies can create win-win situations in terms of environmental improvements and increase the competitiveness of manufacturing firms. The SwitchMed programme, implemented by UNEP and UNIDO and funded by the European Union, supports small and medium-sized enterprises, green entrepreneurs, civil society and policymakers to drive green and sustainable economic development through the transfer of environmentally sound technology in the Mediterranean Sea, known as the MED TEST methodology.

34. ILO projects enhance the resource efficiency of micro-, small and medium-sized enterprises. The ILO Sustaining Competitive and Responsible Enterprises (SCORE) programme is a global programme that improves productivity and working conditions in small and medium-sized enterprises.<sup>24</sup> The primary goal of the global programme is the effective implementation of SCORE Training, which combines practical classroom training with in-factory consulting. SCORE Training is a modular programme that is focused on developing cooperative relations at the workplace. Results of the training in India have shown impacts on cleaner production as well as increased productivity, reduced water wastage, energy consumption and waste and decreased usage of materials such as rubber. ILO has also engaged in the following partnerships in such areas as climate change, the circular economy, sustainable fashion and the fight against desertification: United Nations Alliance for Sustainable Fashion;<sup>25</sup> Platform for Accelerating the Circular Economy;<sup>26</sup> and Partnership for Action on Green Economy.<sup>27</sup>

35. The International Telecommunications Union (ITU) joined forces with nine United Nations organizations to create the E-waste Coalition<sup>28</sup> in order to raise awareness, increase knowledge and provide integrated support to countries in preventing, reducing, collecting, recycling and disposing of e-waste sustainably through enhanced coordination by the United Nations and its partners at all levels in responding to the low-rate of formal collection and recycling of e-waste. The global quantity of electronic waste (e-waste) is increasing at an alarming rate; in 2019, 53.6 million metric tonnes of e-waste were generated globally and by 2030, the

<sup>23</sup> See [www.sciencedirect.com/journal/applied-energy/special-issue/108MDK88GJF](http://www.sciencedirect.com/journal/applied-energy/special-issue/108MDK88GJF).

<sup>24</sup> See [www.ilo.org/empent/Projects/score/lang--en/index.htm](http://www.ilo.org/empent/Projects/score/lang--en/index.htm).

<sup>25</sup> <https://unfashionalliance.org/>.

<sup>26</sup> <https://pacecircular.org/>.

<sup>27</sup> Multi-agency effort carried out by ILO, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), UNEP, the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) and the United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR).

<sup>28</sup> See [www.itu.int/en/ITU-D/Climate-Change/Pages/ewaste/E-waste-Coalition.aspx](http://www.itu.int/en/ITU-D/Climate-Change/Pages/ewaste/E-waste-Coalition.aspx).

estimated amount of e-waste generated will exceed 74 million metric tonnes.<sup>29</sup> E-waste is officially included in the work plan for indicator 12.5.1 of the Goals on national recycling rates, and the importance of considering e-waste is also mentioned in indicator 12.4.2 on hazardous waste. Focusing on e-waste statistics, ITU together with the United Nations University, UNITAR and the International Solid Waste Association, formed the Global e-Waste Statistics Partnership, which provides capacity-building to countries to collect and improve e-waste statistics at the national and regional levels. While UNEP and the Statistics Division of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs are the custodians for the datasets, they recognize the methodologies developed by the Global e-Waste Statistics Partnership and the Partnership on Measuring ICT for Development. Finally, as international standards can help to advance sustainable consumption and production in ICTs and cities, the ITU Telecommunication Standardization Sector (ITU-T) Study Group 5 on environment, climate change and the circular economy is working closely with its membership to develop international standards (ITU-T Recommendations) that support the sustainable consumption and production of ICTs.<sup>30</sup>

36. The International Maritime Organization (IMO) contributes to Goal 12 by making the way that shipping carries goods internationally more environmentally friendly. Key IMO instruments include the International Convention for the Prevention of Pollution from Ships, which regulates operational waste generated by ships, and the London Convention on the Prevention of Marine Pollution by Dumping of Wastes and other Matters and the Protocol thereto. IMO also works to enhance technical capacities in wastewater management on board ships and in ports, and to promote recycling, cleaner production technologies and more sustainable consumption patterns. The IMO initial strategy for reduction of greenhouse gas emissions from ships is an enhancement to global efforts by addressing emissions from international shipping, with the aim to reduce the total annual emissions by international shipping by at least 50 per cent by 2050 compared with 2008, while also pursuing efforts towards phasing out such emissions entirely as soon as possible. The Hong Kong International Convention for the Safe and Environmentally Sound Recycling of Ships contributes to the achievement of Sustainable Development Goal 12 by reducing waste generation and promoting sustainable consumption. The Cape Town Agreement of 2012 on the Implementation of the Provisions of the Torremolinos Protocol of 1993 relating to the Torremolinos International Convention for the Safety of Fishing Vessels, 1977, is key to the social and environmental elements of sustainable consumption and production. It includes mandatory safety measures for fishing vessels and, when it enters into force, will improve the safety of life at sea for hundreds of thousands of fishers worldwide.

37. ECE delivers relevant policy advice at the country level through its environmental performance reviews and other advisory activities that bridge the gap between normative work and policy implementation. It provides a strong platform to support this dialogue across and between multiple sectors, leading to concrete actions such as the voluntary commitments under the Batumi Initiative on Green Economy. “Promoting the circular economy and the sustainable use of natural resources in the ECE region” has been designated by the Executive Committee of ECE as a cross-cutting theme for the high-level segment of the Commission at its sixty-ninth session, which will be held in April 2021.

38. In the Africa region, the economies of most countries in the region depend largely on natural resources, which provide key production inputs. Given its low

<sup>29</sup> Vanessa Forti and others, *The Global E-waste Monitor 2020: Quantities, Flows and the Circular Economy Potential*, United Nations University/UNITAR – co-hosted SCYCLE Programme, ITU and International Solid Waste Association (Bonn/Geneva/Vienna).

<sup>30</sup> See [www.itu.int/en/ITU-T/about/groups/Pages/sg05.aspx](http://www.itu.int/en/ITU-T/about/groups/Pages/sg05.aspx).

industrial base, Africa has the opportunity to advance green industrialization by leapfrogging dirty technologies, as part of an industrial development strategy that will respond to the sustainable development challenges of the region. Against this background, in July 2019 ECA organized an online course on macroeconomic frameworks for an inclusive green economy in Africa, which served to explain the key concepts of an inclusive green economy paradigm within macroeconomic frameworks.

39. The Asia-Pacific region is particularly regressing on promoting responsible consumption and production and climate action. An inclusive approach to sustainable consumption and production is relevant for Asia and the Pacific, where a large proportion of the population lives in poverty and works in the informal economy. The “Closing the Loop” initiative implemented by ESCAP aims to integrate inclusive circular economy principles into municipal plastic waste management approaches. An inclusive approach can have economic, social and environmental co-benefits through lower demand for natural resources, reduced waste and emissions, job creation and enhanced innovation, living and health standards, thereby contributing to the achievement of several interlinked Goals. The projects have improved the capacities of over 100 key waste actors in the cities of Pune, India, and Bangkok, and a related regional policy guide on the circular economy has been produced.

40. A circular economy scenario is particularly relevant to the Latin America and the Caribbean region, given the economic weight of the extractive sectors and the low recycling rates. In addition to organizing capacity-building efforts to assist countries in the implementation of Goal 12, in 2018 and 2019 ECLAC held two regional high-level political meetings to promote new governance of extractive natural resources within the framework of the 2030 Agenda (Goals 12 and 16).<sup>31</sup> Examples of good practices with respect to Goal 12 and its targets in the region include the Regional Agreement on Access to Information, Public Participation and Justice in Environmental Matters in Latin America and the Caribbean (Escazú Agreement); and issuance of the 2019 report entitled *Fiscal Panorama of Latin America and the Caribbean: Tax Policies for Resource Mobilization in the Framework of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*. These good practices could also be used to shift production and consumption patterns towards encouraging decarbonization of the economy and supporting improvements in public health.

41. In the Arab region, little or no progress is being made with regard to the main indicators of sustainable consumption and production. The indicators show a backwards trend such as in the case of exposure to air pollution, per capita carbon dioxide emissions, levels of water stress and per capita municipal waste. Against that background and to support the 10-Year Framework of Programmes on Sustainable Consumption and Production Patterns, ESCWA has been collaborating with the League of Arab States and UNEP to support regional work on sustainable consumption and production, including to showcase best practices, review progress and exchange views on the needs and priorities of the region in order to promote a shift towards sustainable consumption and production.

### C. Strengthening the science-policy interface

42. Science and innovation are fundamental to a sustainable future, both in terms of informing laws and policies and in terms of the technologies that will help to propel sustainable development progress as highlighted by the 2030 Agenda. The United Nations, while promoting science in policymaking through its *Global Sustainable*

<sup>31</sup> See [www.cepal.org/en/pressreleases/mining-ministries-americas-meet-peru-address-sectors-challenges-and-opportunities](http://www.cepal.org/en/pressreleases/mining-ministries-americas-meet-peru-address-sectors-challenges-and-opportunities).

*Development Report*, has dedicated significant effort and resources to building up the science, technology and innovation ecosystem for sustainable development more broadly, including by building capacity for science, technology and innovation and catalysing innovation to advance the Goals. Both the Technology Facilitation Mechanism and the Technology Bank for the Least Developed Countries, two key outcomes in support of science, technology and innovation from the Addis Ababa Action Agenda of the Third International Conference on Financing for Development, have been set up and operationalized over the past few years. In particular, the Technology Facilitation Mechanism firmly established science and technology discussions between Governments and stakeholders at the United Nations.

43. However, more sustained effort is still needed as, globally, science and policy are clearly at a crossroads and require more effective governance to promote better interaction, especially to support preparedness for COVID-19 and similar crises through ongoing work on road maps for science, technology and innovation, the development of guidance and strategies, capacity-building and emerging technologies. In this regard, the General Assembly, in its resolution [74/270](#) on global solidarity to fight COVID-19, adopted on 2 April 2020, called for intensified international cooperation to contain, mitigate and defeat the pandemic, including by exchanging information, scientific knowledge and best practices and by applying the relevant guidelines recommended by the World Health Organization (WHO).

44. In response to that urgent request, the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, together with partners from the Technology Facilitation Mechanism, launched a call for technology solutions, innovator competition and scientists' blog series. Efforts in that regard included organizing online consultations and webinars on COVID-19, and advisory mechanisms and road maps for science, technology and innovation, and preparing long-term technology scenarios for the Goals. More than 140 technology solutions have been received so far, providing timely support for strengthening the established science and technology advisory mechanisms at all levels, including the global level, for COVID-19 and beyond. The key recommendations and commitments through these initiatives and consultations were presented at the 2020 high-level political forum on sustainable development, held in July 2020, and at other high-level United Nations conferences.

45. At the regional level, ECA reports that fewer than half of African countries have adopted policies on science, technology and innovation that consider sustainable development imperatives holistically. Instead, they tend to focus on funding scientific research with less emphasis on technology development, procurement and innovation. Policy implementation is hampered by low policy literacy, low human capacity, insufficient monitoring and accountability, and inadequate budgets for policies on science, technology and innovation. Furthermore, there are also challenges brought about by emerging technologies, such as digital technology, that have yet to be harnessed by the continent.

46. Access to robust data is an integral component of the science-policy interface. In response to the request of member States at the first Asia and Pacific Energy Forum in 2013 to strengthen energy statistics, in 2015 ESCAP launched the Asia Pacific Energy Portal, which is a platform to facilitate research and analysis for decision-making. The portal currently houses more than 200 datasets from global institutions and more than 3,000 policy documents, as well as Geographic Information System-referenced infrastructure maps, which include over 7,000 power plants and country profiles. To respond to energy challenges in the Asia-Pacific region, ESCAP established the Asia-Pacific Network of Energy Think Tanks, which brings together academic institutes, think tanks, universities and not-for-profit entities across the region. The network facilitates research collaboration and information exchange

across countries in the region on energy issues in the social, technical, environmental and economic fields.

47. In May 2020, ECLAC organized a briefing for the region's member countries of the Conference on Science, Innovation and Information and Communications Technologies, a subsidiary body of ECLAC. The briefing was attended by authorities from 15 countries of the region. An overview was presented of the current science and technology system in Latin America and the Caribbean and its main challenges. The discussions referred to the need to strengthen regional integration, build capacities in the health industry and develop the digital economy. In addition, ECLAC conducted research on strengthening ICT and knowledge management capacity in support of the sustainable development of multi-island Caribbean small island developing States. Issues related to oceans, marine resources management and science, technology and innovation are gradually becoming more central to ECLAC research. The 2018 edition of *The Caribbean Outlook* also provides focus on the topic.

#### **D. Financing for development<sup>32</sup>**

48. The financing gap to achieve the Goals in developing countries is estimated to be from \$2.5 to \$3 trillion per year. As an example, for food security and agriculture, the current investment gap reportedly amounts to an annual average of \$265 billion per year from 2016 to 2030.<sup>33</sup> Of that total, some \$198 billion would be for pro-poor investments in the productive sectors \$140 billion for rural development and agriculture and \$58 billion for urban areas. As economic growth remains highly uneven across regions, many developing countries have continued to fall further behind. Before the outbreak of COVID-19, average incomes in one out of five countries (predominantly in Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean, and parts of Western Asia) were projected to stagnate or decline, with more countries expected to see per capita income declines due to COVID-19.

49. In its *Financing for Sustainable Development Report, 2020*, the Inter-Agency Task Force on Financing for Development, found that the international economic and financial systems were not only failing to deliver on the Goals, but that there had also been substantial backsliding in key action areas. Nonetheless, international development cooperation – in the areas of financial resources, capacity development, technology development and transfer, action for policy change, and multi-stakeholder partnership – continues to be a dynamic and formidable means of implementation for the 2030 Agenda (see [E/2020/10](#), para. 1). In the light of new and evolving challenges, such as the COVID-19 pandemic and climate change, international development cooperation will urgently need to adapt to minimize any disproportionate impact on the countries and populations furthest behind and to become more risk-informed in support of developing countries.

50. With respect to pandemics, according to the Inter-Agency Task Force, in its 2020 report, there have been some successful examples of global emergency health finance for health crises, although enhancements are needed in ex ante financing and other forms of cooperation that are efficient, predictable and quick-dispensing and

<sup>32</sup> Section D should be read in conjunction with the note by the Secretary-General on financing for sustainable development ([E/FFDF/2020/2](#)), which serves to highlight the main findings of the 2020 report of the Inter-Agency Task Force on Financing for Development and provides an assessment of progress in implementing the financing for development outcomes.

<sup>33</sup> Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), International Fund for Agricultural Development and World Food Programme, *Achieving Zero Hunger: The Critical Role of Investments in Social Protection and Agriculture, Second edition*, (Rome, FAO, 2015).

build incentives for risk reduction into their design.<sup>34</sup> Regarding the strengthening of national capacities and institutions, there are a range of measures being advanced by the multilateral system in support of national capacity-building, such as the Platform for Collaboration on Tax,<sup>35</sup> and the Data for Now initiative, which is jointly convened by the United Nations, the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development Data, the World Bank and the Sustainable Development Solutions Network. These positive examples need to be scaled up alongside intensified efforts to address key trends, such as the ongoing decline in official development assistance and the need for enhanced learning and knowledge-sharing on the contributions of South-South and triangular cooperation, blended finance and other forms of development cooperation.

51. In addition, countries should aim to better integrate their planning and financing strategies, while development partners should make more effort to align their interventions to country priorities. Building on countries' national experiences with international development cooperation to date, integrated national financing frameworks will be a useful tool to improve the effectiveness of development cooperation by more effectively matching plans, strategies and resources for sustainable development.

52. At the regional level, a range of measures have been put in place, such as the ECLAC debt for climate adaptation swap initiative, which aims to respond to the Caribbean's vulnerability to climate change and natural disasters and the region's high level of debt. In the ESCAP region, close to three quarters of the countries have enacted "polluter pays principle" laws or adopted dedicated guidelines in that regard and at least 13 countries have established project preparation facilities to develop a pipeline of bankable projects. As the Asia-Pacific region is becoming a major global market for green bonds, ESCAP assists countries with special needs in strengthening and accessing the green bond markets in the region. Following the pandemic, ECA organized a meeting with the African Ministers of Finance, resulting in a call to the international community to gather additional resources of \$100 billion for the immediate response to COVID-19, together with the waiver of all interest payments on all debt (estimated at \$44 billion for 2020).

## E. Partnerships

53. The political declaration of the high-level political forum on sustainable development convened under the auspices of the General Assembly in 2019, adopted by the Assembly in its resolution 74/4, underscored the critical importance of partnerships in mobilizing concerted actions in key cross-cutting areas and the urgent need to find new ways for all actors to work together. The 2019 Partnership Forum of the Economic and Social Council also acknowledged multi-stakeholder partnership as a lever to drive inclusive and integrated implementation of the Goals. In the context of the current COVID-19 pandemic, coordinated policy actions and partnerships are vital both to help significantly minimize socioeconomic damage from the crisis and to expedite recovery and sustainable development efforts. Globally, such examples include the latest debt relief commitments of the Group of 20 that would provide a time-bound suspension of debt service payments for the poorest countries that request forbearance. The recent initiatives of the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank for the cancellation of all debts from countries facing a moderate or high risk of

<sup>34</sup> Examples include the Central Emergency Response Fund, the Contingency Fund for Emergencies and the World Bank Pandemic Emergency Financing Facility.

<sup>35</sup> The Platform for Collaboration on Tax brings together the International Monetary Fund, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), the United Nations and the World Bank Group for more coordinated and effective tax capacity-building activities in developing countries to support implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals.



debt distress prior to the pandemic crisis are also noteworthy. Bringing together the expertise of five United Nations agencies,<sup>36</sup> Partnership for Action on Green Economy currently offers Governments comprehensive, integrated technical assistance and capacity-building support, including on green fiscal stimulus packages, to facilitate early recovery efforts. The joint ILO, OECD and WHO “Working for Health” programme is also providing coordinated policy advice and capacity-building support to Governments as they prepare strategies for an enhanced national health workforce.<sup>37</sup>

54. At the regional level, the Agreement Establishing the African Continental Free Trade Area, which is now at the operational phase with 54 signatures and 24 ratifications, is expected to be implemented on July 2020 with the aim of radically accelerating the liberalization of trade in goods and services in Africa. In addition, ECLAC and FAO jointly launched the Platform for Climate Action in Agriculture in December 2019 to support climate adaptation and mitigation practices in the region’s agricultural sector. In the light of United Nations reforms, United Nations entities are also collaborating at the regional level through “issue-based coalitions”, coordinated by a lead agency and joined by other United Nations entities and regional institutions to achieve the Goals and respond to the pandemic crisis.

55. Within the context of the United Nations framework for the immediate socioeconomic response to COVID-19, 14 United Nations agencies provided coordinated support to the Government of Cameroon for the development of a national COVID-19 prevention and response plan; the United Nations country team is also creating a joint basket fund to boost livelihoods for vulnerable communities.<sup>38</sup> In Nepal, the United Nations country team is supporting the Government to set up two call centres to enhance public information efforts focused on the COVID-19 pandemic. This joined-up approach is also seen in Ghana, where the United Nations country team reprogrammed existing resources to help tackle the health, humanitarian and socioeconomic impacts of COVID-19, with complementary actions taken by various entities under the leadership of the Resident Coordinator.

56. In the midst of more coherent partnerships forged at all levels, deliberate arrangements of action networks are becoming increasingly common, providing central avenues for pledging commitments and resources, promoting coordinated actions and launching joint initiatives. The United Nations has been playing a vital role in facilitating such platforms. Within that context, in the lead up to the high-level political forum on sustainable development convened under the auspices of the General Assembly in 2019, the Department of Economic and Social Affairs established actions to accelerate the achievement of the Goals, in order to capture the new, ambitious efforts undertaken by Governments and non-State actors in support of sustainable development. The platform collaborates with the five regional economic commissions and other United Nations entities to facilitate knowledge-building and -sharing and to promote the meaningful engagement of stakeholders, including through voluntary national review workshops held prior to the 2020 high-level political forum.

57. However, notwithstanding the number of commitments and actions mobilized by the 2030 Agenda since 2015, the shift towards more transformative, synergistic

<sup>36</sup> ILO, UNDP, UNEP, UNIDO and UNITAR.

<sup>37</sup> For more information, see [www.who.int/hrh/com-heeg/action-plan-annexes/en/](http://www.who.int/hrh/com-heeg/action-plan-annexes/en/).

<sup>38</sup> Country examples were drawn from the opening statement of the Deputy Secretary-General, delivered at the informal briefing held on 11 May 2020 on the theme “Joining forces: effective policy solutions for COVID-19 response”. Available at [www.un.org/ecosoc/sites/www.un.org/ecosoc/files/files/en/2020doc/DSG’s\\_remarks\\_to\\_ECOSOC\\_informal\\_briefing\\_on\\_COVID-19.pdf](http://www.un.org/ecosoc/sites/www.un.org/ecosoc/files/files/en/2020doc/DSG’s_remarks_to_ECOSOC_informal_briefing_on_COVID-19.pdf).



partnering is not happening at the scale and speed required. Moreover, the COVID-19 crisis is weakening existing social cohesion and solidarity within and among countries and across all actors. With the stakes so high, effective multi-stakeholder partnerships and strong international cooperation are needed now more than ever to build back better and achieve sustainable development.

### III. Conclusions

58. Achieving the Sustainable Development Goals, including Goal 12, requires an enabling environment based on preparedness and strong national capacities to address anticipated and unanticipated crises, and the United Nations system has been actively assisting to support countries in such efforts. The magnitude of the task to deliver on Goal 12 requires multi-stakeholder collaboration across Governments, local authorities, businesses, civil society, scientific organizations and international organizations. As such, the One Planet network was formed to implement the 10-Year Framework of Programmes on Sustainable Consumption and Production Patterns.

59. Nevertheless, worldwide consumption and production, a driving force of the global economy, continues to utilize the natural environment and resources in a model that results in destructive impacts on the planet. The progress to date on Goal 12 shows a trend in the negative direction, while prospects remain bleak owing to the increasing global population. Compared with a 50 per cent achievement rate for the other Goal indicators, Goal 12 is falling behind as only 25 per cent of the indicators of Goal 12: (a) are conceptually clear for measuring the achievement of the Goals; (b) have internationally established methodologies or standards; and (c) have data being reported on them regularly (see [E/2020/56](#), para. 18).

60. Thus, identified opportunities to accelerate action and achieve transformative pathways, including through the use of technologies, should be applied in all of stages of the global value chain. The COVID-19 pandemic offers countries an opportunity to build a recovery plan that will reverse current trends and change our consumption and production patterns towards a sustainable future.

61. Despite all the challenges to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, the international community is still committed to sustainable development and to the Goals of the 2030 Agenda. With renewed resilience, focus, collaboration and strong partnerships, knowledge-sharing, support for educational systems, affordable access to the Internet and further regional and international cooperation, including in science, technology and innovation such as digital technology, success is possible.

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