



General Assembly

Distr.: General
19 July 2023

Original: English

Seventy-eighth session

Item 19 (a) of the provisional agenda*

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 [77/162](#), 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, which is based on recent studies, reports, analysis and inputs from the United Nations system, should be read in conjunction with previous reports to the Assembly on the topic, as well as reports on sustainable development submitted to the Economic and Social Council and the Assembly in 2023, including the document entitled “World economic situation and prospects as of mid-2023” ([E/2023/80](#)); the report of the Secretary-General on the progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals: towards a rescue plan for people and planet; and the *Financing for Sustainable Development Report 2023: Financing Sustainable Transformations. The Global Sustainable Development Report 2023* provides relevant framing and recommendations for action.

* [A/78/150](#).



I. Introduction

1. In its resolution [77/162](#) of 14 December 2022, the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to submit to the Assembly at its seventy-eighth session a report on the implementation of that resolution, with a particular focus on the state of play with regard to sustainable consumption and production and the application and promotion thereof, taking into account the impacts of, response to and recovery from the coronavirus disease (COVID-19), and to recommend concrete actions to implement the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in that regard.

2. In the present report, the global state of play with regard to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is addressed. This is followed by a focused discussion on sustainable consumption and production (Sustainable Development Goal 12), with examples from entities of the United Nations system on steps taken towards its implementation.¹ The report provides an update on Strengthening the science and policy interface, financing sustainable development and partnerships for sustainable development, as requested in General Assembly resolution [77/162](#).

II. Promoting sustainable consumption patterns for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, building on Agenda 21

A. Follow-up of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

Current global situation²

3. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is a culmination of more than four decades of multilateral dialogue and debate on tackling environmental, social and economic challenges faced by the world community. Having gained momentum since the 1972 United Nations Conference on the Human Environment, all the way up to the 2015 United Nations Sustainable Development Summit and Stockholm+50: a healthy planet for the prosperity of all – our responsibility, our opportunity, an international meeting hosted by Sweden and Kenya in 2022, the 2030 Agenda builds on Agenda 21 and identifies the interlinkages of the three dimensions of sustainable development. The 2030 Agenda rests upon the interconnectedness and indivisibility of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals.

4. The world approached the halfway point of the 2030 Agenda, facing a series of crises, at global and regional scales. A confluence of factors – effects of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, the persisting war in Ukraine, the ever worsening impact of climate change and rapidly shifting macroeconomic conditions –

¹ Contributions were received from the following entities of the United Nations system: Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia, Economic Commission for Africa, Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, International Monetary Fund, International Organization for Migration, International Telecommunication Union, Permanent Secretariat for the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, United Nations Capital Development Fund, United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, United Nations Environment Programme, United Nations Industrial Development Organization, United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction, United Nations Office for Project Services, World Food Programme, World Intellectual Property Organization and World Trade Organization.

² The present section reflects assessments highlighted in the report of the Secretary-General (special edition) on the progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals: towards a rescue plan for people and planet ([A/78/80-E/2023/64](#)) and other, similar reports.

are clouding the economic outlook, even as the global picture shows slight signs of improvement.

5. As highlighted in *World Economic Situation and Prospects 2023*,³ the slowdown in global growth in 2023 is likely to be less severe than previously expected, owing mainly to resilient household spending in developed economies and recovery in China. Global growth is now projected to slow from 3.1 per cent in 2022 to 2.3 per cent in 2023, an upward revision by 0.4 percentage points from the January forecast. Global inflation is projected to decline from 7.5 per cent in 2022 to 5.2 per cent in 2023, owing mainly to lower food and energy prices and declining global demand. The global economy is expected to pick up some momentum in 2024 but growth is projected to be at 2.5 per cent, below the longer-term (2000–2019) average of 3.1 per cent. The recent banking sector turmoil in the United States of America and Europe, however, has contributed to a difficult trade-off for central banks between fighting inflation and maintaining financial stability. After a decade of loose monetary policy with low interest rates and quantitative easing in developed countries, the prospect of high interest rates and quantitative tightening now poses a massive challenge for developing countries. The lack of access to affordable finance limits the ability of many Governments to invest in education, health, sustainable infrastructure and the energy transition, while threatening to push a growing number of countries into debt default.

6. The COVID-19 pandemic has reversed three decades of steady progress in global poverty reduction and as a result, globally, the number of people living in extreme poverty increased for the first time in a generation. Skyrocketing food and energy prices have pushed tens of millions of more people into extreme poverty and acute food insecurity. According to the report of the Secretary-General (special edition) on the progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals: towards a rescue plan for people and planet (A/78/80-E/2023/64), the World Food Programme (WFP) estimates that in 2023, 345 million people are acutely food insecure. Under current trends, 575 million people (the majority of whom are women and girls), representing nearly 7 per cent of the world population, will still be living in extreme poverty in 2030 and only about one third of countries will meet the target to halve national poverty levels. Eradicating extreme poverty will be particularly difficult in sub-Saharan Africa and conflict-affected areas (ibid.).

7. As regards employment, the International Labour Organization (ILO) projects that global employment will expand by 1.0 per cent in 2023, a significant deceleration from the 2.3 per cent growth rate of 2022. Women and young people still fare significantly worse in labour markets, a fact indicative of large inequalities in the world of work in many countries. Globally, the labour-force participation rate of women stood at 47.4 per cent in 2022, compared with 72.3 per cent for men. Moreover, globally, in 2022, 58.0 per cent of those employed were in informal employment, which means that precarious jobs were held by about 2 billion workers, most of whom lacked any form of social protection.

8. In the area of education, the impacts of years of underinvestment and learning losses are such that by 2030, some 84 million children will be out of school and 300 million children or young people who attend school will leave without being able to read and write. The outcomes are worse for children living with economic fragility, political instability, conflict or natural disasters, since they are more likely to be cut off from schooling, as are those with disabilities or from ethnic minorities. In some countries, educational opportunities for girls remain severely limited. Even in schools, a lack of trained teachers, inadequate educational materials and poor infrastructure make learning difficult for many students. Over 600 million children

³ United Nations publication, Sales No. E.23.II.C.1.

and adolescents worldwide are still unable to attain minimum proficiency levels in reading and mathematics even though two thirds of them are at school. Compounding these inequities is a digital divide of growing concern, as reflected in the fact that some two thirds of the world's school-age children do not have an Internet connection in their home, restricting their opportunities to further their learning and skills development.⁴

9. While access to electricity and clean cooking fuels has improved in many parts of the world, 675 million people are yet to be connected to grids and 2.3 billion are still cooking with unsafe and polluting fuels. The war in Ukraine and global economic uncertainty continue to cause significant volatility in energy and fuel prices, leading some countries to raise investments in renewables and others to increase their reliance on coal, thereby putting the green transition at risk. The share of renewables in global energy consumption, energy efficiency improvement rates and investments in clean energy also fell short of the desired targets. If the current pace continues, about 660 million people will still lack access to electricity and close to 2 billion people will continue to rely on polluting fuels and technologies for cooking by 2030. To ensure access to energy for all by 2030, we must accelerate electrification, increase investments in renewable energy sources and invest in improving electricity grids (see [A/78/80-E/2023/64](#)).

10. The COVID-19 pandemic has demonstrated the critical importance of sanitation, hygiene and adequate access to clean water and connection to services for sound management of waste and wastewater to prevent and contain diseases. However, billions of people still lack access to safe water, sanitation and hygiene, despite improvement in the provision of these basic services. Water scarcity is a growing problem in many parts of the world and conflicts and climate change are exacerbating the issue. Moreover, water pollution is a significant challenge which affects both human health and the environment in many countries. Severe water-related diseases remain widespread across many developing countries, where only a very small fraction of domestic and urban wastewater (in some cases less than 5 per cent) is treated prior to its release into the environment.⁵ Achieving universal coverage by 2030 will require a sixfold increase in the current global rate of progress on drinking water, a fivefold increase in the rate of progress on sanitation and a threefold increase in the rate of progress on hygiene. Boosting infrastructure investment, improving cross-sectoral coordination and addressing climate change are key to getting Sustainable Development Goal 6 back on track (see [A/78/80-E/2023/64](#)).

11. Destructive trends in ocean health have not abated. The ocean, the world's largest ecosystem, continues to be endangered by rising acidification, eutrophication, declining fish stocks and mounting levels of plastic pollution. While there has been some progress in expanding marine protected areas and combating illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing over the years, more concerted efforts and acceleration are urgently needed. Urgent and coordinated global action is needed to continue to advance towards Sustainable Development Goal 14.

12. Current actions and plans to address the climate crisis are insufficient. Global temperatures have already hit 1.1°C. The rise is due to increasing global greenhouse gas emissions, which reached record highs in 2021. Real-time data from 2022 show emissions continuing on an upward trajectory. Carbon dioxide levels increased from 2020 to 2021 at a rate that is higher than the average annual growth rate of the last decade and already 149 per cent higher than pre-industrial levels. Without transformative action starting now to reduce greenhouse gas emissions deeply and

⁴ See [unicef.org/education](https://www.unicef.org/education).

⁵ See [unwater.org/water-facts/water-quality-and-wastewater](https://www.unwater.org/water-facts/water-quality-and-wastewater).

rapidly in all sectors within this decade, the 1.5°C target will be at risk and with it the lives of more than 3 billion people. Failure to act leads to intensifying heatwaves, droughts, flooding, wildfires, sea level rise and famines.

13. Climate change, lack of effective waste management, pollution including from plastic, loss of biodiversity and depleted natural resources are interlinked emergencies. Addressing these challenges requires a total transformation in the way we produce, consume and do business. Today, with improved understanding of interdependencies, heightened awareness and digital innovation come unprecedented opportunities for major structural, economic and social transformation in resource efficiency to drive the shift to new circular business models. The United Nations system has been actively engaged in supporting countries in their transition towards sustainable consumption and production.

Sustainable consumption and production

14. One of the most significant policy developments that emerged in 2022 was the approval of a Global Strategy for Sustainable Consumption and Production ([A/77/607](#), annex) to support the achievement of global sustainability ambitions and a just transition by 2030 through the shift to sustainable consumption and production practices across society. The Global Strategy calls for the 10-Year Framework of Programmes on Sustainable Consumption and Production Patterns and its large multi-stakeholder network, the One Planet Network,⁶ to actively contribute to the implementation of the strategy. The Global Strategy for Sustainable Consumption and Production has four complementary and interconnected pillars (see [A/77/607](#), annex, sect. III). The secretariat of the 10-Year Framework of Programmes contributes to the implementation of the Global Strategy through the Approved Results Framework and Budget of the 10-Year Framework of Programmes secretariat, which was adopted by the intergovernmental Board of the 10-Year Framework of Programmes in December 2022.⁷ The One Planet Network under the 10-Year Framework of Programmes encompasses more than 5,800 member organizations of all sizes and 4,000 individual experts on sustainable consumption and production, representing all sectors of society from across the globe. The Network is one of the largest United Nations global platforms dedicated to engaging and supporting countries and all relevant stakeholders towards sustainable economic transformations.⁸

15. Adopting sustainable economic models that promote circular approaches of consumption and production remains urgent. In four years (2019–2022), a total of 485 policy instruments supporting the shift to sustainable consumption and production were reported by 62 countries and the European Union. Official reporting on Sustainable Development Goal 12.1 has been decreasing every year since 2019 and continues to reflect considerable regional imbalances, with more than 50 per cent of policy instruments reported by countries of Europe and Central Asia. Hence, there has been an increased focus within the Global Strategy for Sustainable Consumption and Production on communication and increased efforts related to the sharing of

⁶ The One Planet Network has been formed to implement the commitment of the 10-Year Framework of Programmes on Sustainable Consumption and Production Patterns. It is a multi-stakeholder partnership for sustainable development, generating collective impact through its six programmes, on Sustainable Public Procurement, Sustainable Buildings and Construction, Sustainable Tourism, Sustainable Food Systems, Consumer Information for Sustainable Consumption and Production, and Sustainable Lifestyles and Education. Countries, including all relevant stakeholders and organizations, are invited to join and actively engage in the One Planet Network, which is an open partnership.

⁷ See www.oneplanetnetwork.org/knowledge-centre/resources/approved-results-framework-and-budget-10yfp-secretariat-2023-2024.

⁸ See progress report on the 10-Year Framework of Programmes on Sustainable Consumption and Production Patterns ([E/2023/72](#)).

progress within and across regions to enable a better understanding of where the world stands on sustainable consumption and production policies and to promote good practices. These efforts must be complemented by the technologies, expertise, partnerships and financial resources that can unlock opportunities for change and innovation.

B. Examples of United Nations development system support in the implementation of sustainable consumption and production

16. The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) has focused its efforts on building sustainable consumption and production and circularity in high-impact sectors which have been identified as such based on their potential to reduce the climate, biodiversity and pollution footprint across the entire value chain. Such high-impact sectors include the food and agriculture system, extractives and mining, transport, building and construction, electronics and textiles, with the finance sector being a key cross-cutting enabler. The interventions of UNEP in those sectors are driven by life cycle approaches. UNEP has used price incentives to reduce carbon pollution and in this context effort has led a collaborative effort to assess the impacts of environmentally harmful subsidies such as fossil fuel and agriculture subsidies.

17. UNEP is implementing the One Plastics Initiative to address plastic pollution systemically, with a long-term vision to end plastic pollution by 2040. UNEP, together with the Global Opportunities for the Sustainable Development Goals initiative, is supporting the circular economy in Africa and Latin America and the Caribbean, focusing on the key sectors of plastics and electronics. In 2022, the Global Tourism Plastics Initiative under the One Planet Network Sustainable Tourism Programme continued to grow, reaching a total of 145 signatories after having engaged an additional 53 signatories, of which 75 per cent were business stakeholders. The Global Opportunities for the Sustainable Development Goals initiative, together with the Sustainable Tourism Programme under the 10-Year Framework of Programmes on Sustainable Consumption and Production Patterns and in collaboration with the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), is working to upscale sustainable tourism in Africa and Central Asia.

18. In its resolution [77/161](#) on promoting zero-waste initiatives to advance the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the General Assembly requested that a high-level meeting be organized to promote sustainable consumption and production patterns, including innovative projects and programmes such as local and national zero-waste initiatives to foster the environmentally sound management of waste. Pursuant to the decision of the Assembly in the same resolution to proclaim 30 March as International Day of Zero Waste, the first International Day of Zero Waste was organized on 30 March 2023. In that context, UNEP, in collaboration with the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat) and the One Planet Network, established a repository of good practices of zero-waste initiatives and promoted good practices of zero waste. An Advisory Board of Eminent Persons on Zero Waste was subsequently set up to promote local and national zero-waste initiatives through, inter alia, the dissemination of best practices and success stories.

19. Unsustainable food systems remain one of the biggest challenges to achieving sustainable consumption and production and the Sustainable Development Goals. To assist countries in translating their commitments into effective actions for reaching the goal of sustainable food systems by 2030, WFP is actively involved in the Food systems coordination hub, which seeks to facilitate the implementation of national pathways by engaging the ecosystem of support across the United Nations system and by advocating for a food systems approach. Building on the momentum of the 2021

Food Systems Summit, the United Nations Food Systems Stocktaking Moment will be held in Rome in July 2023.

20. Desertification, land degradation and droughts affect food security, with droughts being among the greatest threats to sustainable production and consumption in both developing and developed countries. Land restoration encompasses key sustainable food systems journeys which promote local food production and consumption and reduce dependencies, while at the same time preserving biodiversity. WFP promotes land restoration in line with the United Nations Decade on Ecosystem Restoration by supporting Governments' efforts, particularly through integrated resilience programmes using participatory and community-based approaches.

21. In recognition of the significance and pertinence of smart and efficient use of resources towards achieving sustainable consumption and production, the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) endeavours to promote the adoption of digital transformation and the fourth industrial revolution (4IR) in the industrial sector as a potent tool for achieving this objective. Furthermore, UNIDO has been contributing to the achievement of Sustainable Development Goal 12⁹ and Goal target 12.b¹⁰ and has designed new initiatives to strengthen the sustainability of small and medium-sized enterprises and small farmers and to equip the Governments of Member States with analytical tools and policies to promote sustainable tourism and responsible production and consumption patterns.

22. The International Telecommunication Union (ITU), in collaboration with UNEP and the German Agency for International Cooperation, continues to provide e-waste technical assistance to countries related to their national e-waste management policy and e-waste regulation as well as capacity-building through the Global e-Waste Statistics Partnership with the United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR). In addition, ITU has been actively involved in advancing circular procurement and sustainability in the information and communications technology (ICT) sector by developing standards on circular public procurement such as Recommendation ITU-T L.1061. To facilitate its implementation, ITU, with other entities, developed the Circular and Sustainable Public Procurement ICT Guide, which provides practical guidance and assistance to ICT procurement planners and professionals in improving the circular and sustainable outcomes of the ICT buying decisions of their organization and in averting adverse impacts on social and environmental systems.

23. Digital companies are playing a growing role in the race to eliminate harmful emissions from industry, transport, energy production and other activities. By purchasing growing shares of renewable energy, investing in carbon removal and issuing green bonds, the digital technology firms driving the world's digital transformation have moved to the forefront of efforts to reduce carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gas emissions. ITU and the World Benchmarking Alliance have been monitoring emissions and energy use of 150 of the world's leading tech companies in an annual industry assessment report. The report showed that the 150 digital companies consumed 1.6 per cent of global electricity production in 2020. Technical standards such as those developed by ITU Study Group ITU-T SG5 provide concrete methodologies and guidance to the ICT sector on how to set science-based

⁹ Sustainable Development Goal 12: Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns.

¹⁰ Target 12.b: Develop and implement tools to monitor sustainable development impacts for sustainable tourism that creates jobs and promotes local culture and products; and indicator 12.b.1: Implementation of standard accounting tools to monitor the economic and environmental aspects of tourism sustainability.

targets, achieve net zero emissions and assess energy consumption and greenhouse gas emissions.

24. Many other United Nations entities have been making efforts to integrate sustainable consumption and production efforts in their organization's work. In the Paris Agreement adopted under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change process, the important role of sustainable patterns of consumption and production in addressing climate change is recognized. More recently, at the twenty-seventh session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, held in Sharm el-Sheikh, Egypt, from 6 to 20 November 2022, the importance of linkages between climate action and sustainability was reconfirmed, including through decision 1/CMA.4 of the Conference of the Parties serving as the meeting of the Parties to the Paris Agreement, in which the importance of transition to sustainable lifestyles and sustainable patterns of consumption and production was noted. World Trade Organization policy dialogues and awareness creation efforts on trade and environmental sustainability continue to play an important role in the implementation of targets under Sustainable Development Goal 12 by promoting sustainable consumption and production practices. The International Organization for Migration made an institutional commitment in 2017 to mainstream environmental sustainability in its strategies, projects and programmes, and facility management and operations, as part of its mission to uphold the well-being of migrants and communities. The World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) is directly promoting the deployment and awareness of innovation and technology as green solutions to many Goal 12-related issues, as well as climate change and food security. For sustainable procurement, the United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS) has systematically embedded and improved procurement policies that complement and enhance the sustainable impact of operations (as reflected, for example, in the UNOPS Sustainable Procurement Framework¹¹) and encourages companies to adopt sustainable practices such as through the supplier sustainability programme DRiVE (Delivering Responsibility in Vendor Engagement).

25. The Latin America and the Caribbean region is characterized by an "extraction-production-waste" economic model, generating negative environmental impact, low economic growth and social exclusion. The region produces 541,000 tons of municipal waste per day, a figure that is expected to increase by 25 per cent by 2050. It is estimated that by 2050, the consumption of materials in urban households will increase to 25 tons per capita, above the 6–8 tons that the International Resource Panel considers sustainable. The recycling rate is only 4.5 per cent. In this context, the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) is supporting initiatives and mobilizing actors to promote a more circular economy in several countries, for example, by supporting Argentina in defining greener productive strategies for specific sectors such as agrifood, wood and the automotive industry and delivering technical assistance in Uruguay for the building of a national plan and strategy on a circular economy. It is estimated that the transition to a circular economy would generate a net total of 4.8 million quality jobs in the region by 2030 and would have the potential to reduce global greenhouse gas emissions by as much as 45 per cent.

26. In March 2023, the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) organized a regional consultation on the circular economy transition in the Arab region to discuss the status, challenges and potential of a circular economy in the region and explore the role of Governments, the private sector and civil society

¹¹ See https://content.unops.org/service-Line-Documents/Procurement/UNOPS-Procurement-Manual-Annex-1-2021_EN.pdf.

organizations in the transition.¹² Adequate laws and legislation that consider circular economy principles in production and manufacturing processes across sectors were highlighted as a priority for the region. Mobilizing necessary funding and linking it to climate change mitigation and adaptation strategies were identified as a key accelerator. ESCWA is working on mapping the progress in the circular economy transition in the Arab region. Some sectors showed a growing trend towards circular practices, such as solid waste management, with notable benefits accruing to the environment through material recovery and reduction of pollution and greenhouse gases emissions. A few countries have established policies and strategic visions with set targets for the transition, as exemplified by the United Arab Emirates Circular Economy Policy 2021–2031, which addresses sustainability in manufacturing, infrastructure, transport and food sectors, and Vision 2040 of Oman, which aims at ensuring a sustainable use of natural resources, through the creation of a cross-sectoral green and circular economy.

27. The Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) is working on behalf of greater traceability and transparency in fashion sector value chains to facilitate use and recycling uptake of sustainable materials, in cooperation with value chain actors in Denmark, France, Germany, Italy, Switzerland and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, engaging 60 partners. ECE is working to build on the sector-specific expertise of the Commission in the area of transparency and traceability of supply chains. A newly established team of specialists on environmental, social and governance traceability in sustainable supply chains for the circular economy is developing standards and tools for use across a range of sectors, including minerals. Moreover, ECE is working to effect a shift in understanding and to harness the economic value of waste, as countries seek to transition towards a circular economy in which the very meaning of the word “waste” is undergoing a reconceptualization, as developed under the Conference of European Statisticians framework on waste statistics which provides a new perspective on defining and measuring waste products.

28. The Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) is assisting countries in Africa in implementing policy measures aimed at altering the way in which they produce and consume products and services. Mauritius, for instance, is developing a road map and legislative framework on the circular economy, while South Africa has developed a just energy transition investment plan. Moreover, under the Bamako Convention on the Ban of the Import into Africa and the Control of Transboundary Movement and Management of Hazardous Wastes within Africa, 30 African nations have agreed to strengthen management of hazardous refuse, including plastics and e-waste. In general, however, the promulgation and enforcement of legislation in Africa vary considerably.

C. Strengthening the science-policy interface, data and digitalization

29. The United Nations system has been fully engaged in the field of science, technology including digital technology, and innovation. In 2021, the Secretary-General released his report entitled “Our Common Agenda” (A/75/982), which includes a call to “protect the online space and strengthen its governance” (para. 93) and to advance a global digital compact which would promote an “open, free and secure digital future for all”. The Office of the Envoy of the Secretary-General on Technology is charged with facilitating dialogue on these recommendations and other aspects of Our Common Agenda that reflect the aim towards accelerating global digital cooperation. The Common Agenda proposes that the global digital compact be

¹² See www.unescwa.org/events/circular-economy-transition-opportunities-and-challenges.

agreed at the Summit of the Future in September 2024 through a preparatory technology track involving all stakeholders.

30. In March 2023, the Commission on Science and Technology for Development held its twenty-sixth session (with substantive servicing by the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD)) under two priority themes, one of which was “Technology and innovation for cleaner and more productive and competitive production”. Participants remained concerned over the digital gap and the differing speeds and capacities in developing and implementing green technologies, especially the risk that least developed countries could be left behind. The international community must support those countries, including by facilitating joint initiatives and sharing technical know-how. The fact that States play a critical role in driving green transformation was a subject of discussion.

31. In May 2023, the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations Secretariat and partners organized the eighth multi-stakeholder forum on science, technology and innovation for the Sustainable Development Goals with the theme “Science, technology and innovation for accelerating the recovery from the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) and the full implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development at all levels”. The Forum recognized that the challenges and risks associated with digital development are serious and that regulations respecting human rights and laws must be implemented. Particular stress was placed on ethical considerations centring on artificial intelligence algorithm development and a review mechanism for achieving universal access to the Internet and digital technologies. Treating data as a public good and therefore ensuring data access to all people in all countries is vital. As it stands, a few global platforms dominate the data value chain, raising concerns about developing countries serving as providers of raw data but having limited access to digital intelligence derived from their data. The multilateral system is aptly placed to establish ground rules and procedures to ensure that the benefits from technology outweigh risks and negative impacts.

32. The *Global Sustainable Development Report 2023* slated for release in September 2023 expands on the 2019 report with a focus on accelerating action and overcoming impediments that stand in the way of making levers work together. To this end, the report addresses time dynamics of transformation and implementation – movement from emergence to acceleration to stabilization along an *S*-shaped curve. It includes concrete recommendations and tools grounded in evidence for accelerating Sustainable Development Goal implementation and focuses on the aim of making the field of science more supportive of this acceleration.

33. UNIDO works with member States and industries to adopt digital and artificial intelligence-based technologies which have the potential to transform industry and promote growth in a sustainable manner. It keeps abreast of emerging digital and artificial intelligence-based technologies, evaluates the readiness for sectoral stakeholders and helps countries create strategies for establishing innovation ecosystems. UNIDO plays a major role in bridging the gap between academic institutions and policymakers, offering a comprehensive package of solutions at engineering level and in terms of economics regarding the circular economy.

34. The Global e-Waste Statistics Partnership, managed by ITU and UNITAR, tracks the progress of e-waste over time and assists countries in generating comprehensive e-waste statistics. Its objective is to provide valuable insights, including through science-policy research, into global e-waste data and its correlation with the Sustainable Development Goals. By doing so, the Partnership enhances awareness and comprehension among policymakers, industries, academia, media and the public regarding e-waste, ultimately fostering informed decision-making and

promoting sustainable development reference points and fostering collaboration among diverse actors, including Governments, academia and industry.

35. The WIPO GREEN database of needs and green technologies contains more than 127,000 solutions, many uploaded by innovators and companies. The technology categories “Products, material and processes” and “Pollution and waste” together contain more than 18,000 solutions derived from all over the world, with some being simple and cheap and others highly advanced. The database is a United Nations-based free and public green technology resource, and more. WIPO GREEN implements acceleration projects where individual environmental and other needs are identified within a focus area and subsequently matched against feasible solutions.

36. The United Nations Capital Development Fund (UNCDF), in partnership with the private sector, has successfully developed affordable and innovative digital solutions. The UNCDF Inclusive Digital Economy Scorecard initiative, which is being implemented in 31 countries across Africa, Asia and the Pacific, serves as a valuable tool for guiding and monitoring Member States in their transition to a digital economy. Its main purpose is to help Governments and private partners identify barriers hindering development of inclusive digital economies and establish appropriate priorities. To promote innovation within the private sector, UNCDF collaborates with fintech firms, financial service providers and other entrepreneurs in developing and piloting digital finance solutions, thereby accelerating economic growth and sustainable development.

37. New and emerging technologies and tools present opportunities to strengthen risk assessment and overcome data gaps. Greater investment in capacity development and science and technology for multidimensional risk assessment and strategic foresight is an imperative, particularly in the context of the unique challenges faced by the most vulnerable countries. The United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction Risk Information Exchange (RiX) tool is a risk information aggregator which compiles links to data on vulnerability, exposure, hazards and climate projection and supports country teams in analysing findings and informing decision-making and planning processes.

38. UNEP continues to support the establishment of a network of regional Science Partners for Sustainable Consumption and Production by partnering with recognized scientific institutions in Africa, Asia and the Pacific and Latin America, as well as with the initiative connecting global initiatives with regional needs and solutions. The Science Partners focus on the Sustainable Consumption and Production Hotspot Analysis Tool to support sustainable consumption and production policies, offering capacity-building and technical advice. In Asia and the Pacific and Latin America and the Caribbean, the Science Partners have integrated the Hotspot Analysis Tool into institutions’ curricula. In all regions, the Secretariat and the Global Opportunities for the Sustainable Development Goals initiative are working with relevant institutions to identify countries for direct Hotspot Analysis Tool assessment support in 2023.

39. In line with the Global Strategy for Sustainable Consumption and Production, the 10-Year Framework of Programmes for Sustainable Consumption and Production Patterns, together with Coalition for Digital Environmental Sustainability, has inaugurated a new flagship initiative entitled “Digitalization for Circular Economy” for developing and implementing a critical path for harnessing digital technologies and unleashing the full potential of a circular economy. The initiative brings together experts and practitioners, including ITU, the World Economic Forum, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), the World Business Council for Sustainable Development, the Green Digital Finance Alliance, the Greentech Alliance, the Wuppertal Institute for Climate, Environment and Energy,

South Africa, Amazon, Spring Activator, the Wellbeing Economy Alliance, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the Metabolic Institute.

40. At the regional level, to strengthen the science-policy interface and data, ECLAC is working in close collaboration with the Inter-American Development Bank, UNEP, UNIDO and the Global Opportunities for the Sustainable Development Goals initiative on a circularity gap report for Latin America and the Caribbean. The report will be the first document containing data gathered on the circular economy in Latin America and the Caribbean. The report will establish a baseline on the circular economy which will be key to advancing implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 12 in the region. The outcomes of the activity should enable member States to better understand the key sectors, materials and kinds of strategies that should be prioritized to achieve a circular economy. This activity should provide a valuable benchmark for measuring performance of the Latin America and Caribbean region relative to global circularity metrics.

41. As of 2022, Africa's relative share in the global production of environmentally sound technologies, digital technologies and related science was below the global average. While most African countries have improved their innovation policy environment in line with the Science, Technology and Innovation Strategy for Africa 2024, progress on sustainable consumption and production continues to be marginal. This shortcoming is attributable largely to inadequate public and private investment in research and development. While gross expenditure on research and development of North African and sub-Saharan countries has been improving over the past years, reaching about 0.76 per cent and 0.32 per cent, respectively, it is still below the target of 1 per cent of gross domestic product (GDP) recommended by the African Union. Additional financial support is needed particularly for digital technologies. Within this context, to leverage digital technologies, the ECA integrated planning and reporting toolkit equips planners in member States with the capacity to digitally align their planning and financial frameworks with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want. However, the paucity of data remains a significant challenge for African countries, which continues to constrain capacity to measure progress across all Sustainable Development Goals and Agenda 2063.

D. Financing for development

42. The COVID-19 pandemic and the unequal recovery hit developing countries hardest. While developed countries adopted expansionary fiscal and monetary policies which enabled them to invest in recovery and largely returned to pre-pandemic growth paths, developing countries did not regain lost ground. The tightening of global financing conditions has been devastating for countries with high debt levels, considering that over 40 per cent of people living in extreme poverty live in countries with severe debt challenges. The climate crisis continues unabated, with a disproportionate impact on least developed countries and small island developing States. For these countries, a prolonged period of subdued investment is exacerbating already large climate and Sustainable Development Goal investment gaps. At the same time, the war in Ukraine has amplified and accelerated a global cost-of-living crisis, pushing tens of millions more people into extreme poverty and hunger.

43. According to UNCTAD, an annual investment gap of \$2.5 trillion exists in developing countries alone for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals by 2030. Addressing the financial gap for sustainable development, especially for the transition towards sustainable consumption and production, remains a complex and pressing challenge. The Sustainable Development Goals Summit and the High-level Dialogue on Financing for Development in September 2023 and the Summit of the

Future in 2024 provide opportunities to the international community to identify actionable recommendations, renew their commitments to resource mobilization for sustainable development and inform the Fourth International Conference on Financing for Development in 2025.

44. For effective implementation of the sustainable development agenda, national Governments and their partners need to focus on structural reforms, including efforts to enhance macroeconomic stability, fiscal policy with sustainability objectives, institutional quality, transparency and governance, which are associated with stronger medium-term economic growth. Scaling up investment in sustainable industrial transformation can be a key to rescuing the Sustainable Development Goals. Industrialization and structural transformation have been historic engines of economic and productivity growth, job creation and technological advancement and have laid the foundation for poverty reduction and a sustained mobilization of domestic resources. Moreover, public-private partnerships and a vibrant, domestic private sector engaged in dynamic activities have been at the heart of sustained progress and development in most countries. Attracting private investment through appropriate incentives to sectors that support sustainable consumption and production is critical.

45. The United Nations system is actively engaged in assisting countries in their financing efforts. For example, UNEP has developed the sustainable budgeting approach, an easy-to-use evidence-based decision support tool for aligning fiscal policy and public finance with the Sustainable Development Goals and the green economy. The sustainable budgeting approach was successfully piloted in Gabon in 2021 and endorsed by African ministers of finance, the economy and the environment in Egypt during the run-up to twenty-seventh session of the Conferences of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. UNEP continues to support member States in design and implementation of their public finance through initiatives such as the Green Fiscal Policy Network, which is a joint partnership between UNEP, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the German Agency for International Cooperation aimed at facilitating knowledge-sharing and dialogue on green fiscal policy reforms. The United Nations Environment Programme Finance Initiative and the Global Opportunities for the Sustainable Development Goals initiative have been working together to regionalize the global report on financing circularity in Africa and Latin America and the Caribbean, together with the Inter-American Development Bank and the African Development Bank, and have engaged over 25 financial institutions.

46. Blended finance, combining official development assistance (ODA), other public capital and private sector resources, is a promising approach to addressing sustainable development financing challenges. UNCDF has actively pursued this approach, particularly in supporting least developed countries, providing valuable insights and recommendations for future efforts.¹³ In addition, UNCDF has signed a partnership agreement with WFP to co-create sustainable financing solutions to increase local food production and diversification. UNCDF is deploying its financial instruments adapted to local production for local consumption activities to fill the financing gap experienced by micro, small and medium-sized enterprises, women's associations and cooperatives and village savings associations.

47. Investing in disaster risk reduction is a precondition for developing sustainability in a rapidly changing climate. The United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction has been assisting countries in their efforts to accelerate both public

¹³ See Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development and United Nations Capital Development Fund, *Blended Finance in the Least Developed Countries 2020: Supporting a Resilient COVID-19 Recovery* (Paris, 2020).

and private investments in disaster risk reduction. The Office helps Member States develop a comprehensive national disaster risk reduction financing strategy to leverage the full spectrum of pre-and post-disaster financial resources from public, private and international sources.

48. At the regional level, ECA is assisting member States in their financing efforts through studies and capacity-building. Africa's development financing gap has significantly widened following the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, compounded by the war in Ukraine and ongoing climate change, exacerbating economic and social vulnerabilities on the continent. Africa's key financing challenges lie in the public-private sector nexus and the interaction between the two.

49. In the ECLAC region, a new regional initiative has been developed to leverage new financing to promote changes in production methods towards regenerative agriculture and cattle ranching, in the midst of the disruption by climate change of Latin America's agricultural systems, which is driving producers to adopt unsustainable production methods. Through an improved enabling environment for ecosystem-based adaptation, this initiative, under implementation in Argentina, Colombia, Ecuador, Paraguay and Peru, will transform 3 million hectares of agricultural land into regenerative landscapes and benefit climate resilience, biodiversity, productivity and producers. The initiative will increase knowledge of agriculture practices applying ecosystem-based adaptation and green recovery by analysing challenges and achievements while strengthening regulatory frameworks that promote ecosystem-based adaptation and eliminating disincentives as populations return from pandemic isolation. More than 2,300 producers will adopt these approaches and a multi-stakeholder platform will facilitate public-private community coordination and promote rapid scaling of adoption. ECLAC is also assisting the subregion through its Debt for Climate Adaptation Initiative, which seeks to substantively address the high and unsustainable level of debt while fostering investment in climate adaptation and resilience building.

50. ESCWA developed a tool kit for energy efficiency financing instruments for buildings in the Arab region. This tool kit provides policymakers and other stakeholders with information taken from around the world on a number of financing instruments for building energy efficiency and aims towards guiding the design and development of specific instruments in the Arab region.

E. Partnerships for sustainable development

51. Today's uncertain, crises-ridden world calls for more broad-based, inclusive partnerships which effectively engage stakeholders beyond national Governments in support of sustainable development. At the 2023 partnership forum of the Economic and Social Council, Member States reiterated the vital importance of partnerships, including United Nations-associated partnerships, to improve their transparency, accountability and inclusiveness, as well as the importance of South-South cooperation. The United Nations system continues to promote effective multi-stakeholder partnerships, some of which are highlighted below.

52. The Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations Secretariat has been hosting a number of action networks managed by various entities, both within and outside the United Nations system, to facilitate knowledge exchange on sustainable development practices in connection with major United Nations conferences and processes. For example, as a result of the 2022 United Nations Conference to Support the Implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 14: Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development and the United Nations Conference on the Midterm Comprehensive

Review of the Implementation of the Objectives of the International Decade for Action, “Water for Sustainable Development”, 2018–2028 (United Nations 2023 Water Conference), numerous voluntary commitments were pledged, resulting in approximately 2,786 and over 800 commitments, respectively, recorded in the registry managed by the Department of Economic and Social Affairs. In the lead-up to the upcoming Sustainable Development Goals Summit 2023, the Department is planning to launch the revamped global registry entitled “SDG Actions Platform”¹⁴ to capture high-impact policies, initiatives and commitments of Governments and other stakeholders aimed at accelerating the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals.

53. UNEP, in collaboration with UNIDO, continues to support the Global Alliance for Circular Economy and Resource Efficiency. The year 2022 marked a change of direction for the Global Alliance, which has consolidated its position as a platform for synergic work among Governments for the promotion of a circular economy transition. Member countries of the Alliance shared their knowledge and good practices at key high-level events, including the resumed fifth session of the United Nations Environment Assembly of UNEP and the World Circular Economy Forum 2022. Moreover, the Partnership for Action on Green Economy created by UNEP, UNDP, ILO, UNIDO and UNITAR continues to provide support to countries in achieving multiple targets of Sustainable Development Goal 12 by assisting them in their transition towards an inclusive green economy through providing policy advice, assessments, capacity-building and analytical tools outputs.

54. UNCDF and WFP are co-leading the Resilient Local Food Supply Chain Alliance which focuses on local production for local consumption. Under this alliance, UNCDF supported the development of the Burundi road map to promote sustainable production systems that are resilient to climate change. The road map promotes the gender dimension and the empowerment of young people in the context of sustainable food systems and strengthens governance and innovative financing mechanisms for local food systems.

55. The International Trade Centre, together with a number of bilateral development cooperation organizations, United Nations entities and other relevant key action networks, launched the Green to Compete initiative, aimed at advancing circular economy, climate resilience and the biodiversity agenda with a special focus on connecting micro, small and medium-sized enterprises to sustainable global value chains.

56. The World Tourism Organization, in collaboration with the Governments of Japan and Switzerland and other partners, has developed the Tourism for SDGs Platform, an innovative online tool which provides the global community with a space for co-creation and engagement of all actors in realizing sustainable tourism.

57. In accordance with the Paris Agreement and to help achieve its long-term goals, UNDP, UNEP and the Permanent Secretariat for the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change are co-developing an interactive online toolbox and user guide for building circularity into nationally determined contributions which support all countries in identifying, prioritizing, implementing and tracking circular economy interventions as part of their nationally determined contributions. A key tool included is the Sustainable Consumption and Production Hotspot Analysis Tool which helps countries identify hotspots of unsustainable consumption and production in different sectors.

58. Following the key recommendations of Stockholm+50, ILO, UNEP and the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) developed the Green Jobs for Youth Pact,

¹⁴ See <https://sdgs.un.org/partnerships>.

which was launched at the twenty-seventh session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. The Pact aims at tackling the youth and green jobs deficit along three tracks: (a) employment and entrepreneurship, (b) education and training for green skills and (c) empowerment and youth partnerships, to enable the transition to be made to a low-carbon, circular and nature-positive economy. In 2023, the Pact is being implemented at the regional level.

59. UNOPS works with partners to assist in projects as well as to accelerate national commitment to promote public procurement practices that are sustainable in accordance with national policies and priorities. UNOPS supports strengthening partners' systems and ability to do their own procurement effectively, by conducting assessments based on the partner's needs, developing action plans and building capacity.

60. ITU leverages the knowledge and skills of professionals in the field of sustainable development as part of its commitment to South-South cooperation and to facilitate training programmes for neighbouring countries. With the collaboration of experts from Uganda and the United Republic of Tanzania, ITU successfully delivered training sessions to various African nations on crucial topics, including e-waste data and statistics. ITU, together with UNITAR and UNEP, has been involved in several regional projects focused on building regional capacity in e-waste data and statistics across national statistical offices, ministries of the environment, ICT ministries and ICT regulators in East Africa, Latin America, Eastern Europe and the Arab States.

61. WIPO facilitates access to knowledge through its Access to Specialized Patent Information and Access to Research for Development and Innovation programmes, public-private partnerships offering free or low-cost access to patent databases and scientific and technical content, respectively, for institutions in developing countries. The Access to Research for Development and Innovation programme is a member of Research4Life, a global partnership between United Nations organizations (WIPO, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), ILO, UNEP and the World Health Organization (WHO)), scientific and technical publishers and other supporting partners.

62. UNDP, the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction and the World Meteorological Organization are collaborating with multiple partners, including from the scientific community, to develop a new tracking system for recording and analysing hazardous events and disaster losses and damages. The new-generation data system is interoperable, matches with the level of data and digital maturity in any specific country and produces disaggregated information. The system is able to track hazardous events and losses and damages to scale at both national and local levels on a continual basis.

63. IOM, with its partners from all entities, works to ensure that migrants, diasporas and displaced persons are part of the solution and that human mobility can be leveraged as an accelerator towards responsible consumption and production. IOM strives for inclusion of mobile populations. Through the Diversity, Inclusion and Social Cohesion initiative, for instance, IOM supported workshops and focus group discussions for systematic exchange of ideas, mutual learning and achieving innovation in empowering migrants to participate in new and emerging digital spaces.

64. At the regional level, ECA assists many countries in Africa in their engagement in South-South and triangular cooperation in various areas of sustainable development. For example, Ethiopia was the top African South-South cooperation actor and is both a provider and recipient of South-South cooperation, with most of its engagements being with China, India and Uganda. To facilitate exchanges of

experience, share best practices and engage stakeholders in the circular economy transition, ECE has recently launched the CIRCULAR STEP platform, which will bring together Governments, the private sector, academia, civil society and other actors from all 56 member States. The Economic Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) is collaborating with the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat and other partners to align public and private finance through innovative financing mechanisms such as debt-for-climate swaps in the Pacific and Sustainable Development Goal bonds in Cambodia. ECLAC is one of the institutions implementing the Latin America and the Caribbean Circular Economy Coalition, an initiative launched in 2020 which consists of a platform for the exchange of experiences, practices and progress in strategy of countries of the region.

III. Conclusions

65. Addressing the challenges faced by the world today requires a total transformation in the way we produce, consume and do business. Today, with digital innovations come unprecedented opportunities for major structural economic and social transformation in resource efficiency to drive the shift to new circular business models. Studies show that sustainable consumption and production practices can play a crucial role in fostering continued economic recovery in the post-pandemic world. For instance, the renewable energy sector, a key component of sustainable consumption and production, has the potential to create over 18 million jobs worldwide by 2030, more than offsetting job losses in the declining fossil fuel industries.¹⁵

66. To accelerate the shift towards more sustainable consumption and production patterns, government policy and its regulatory environment will need to shift to create change in high-impact industrial sectors and value chains. Reframing of macroeconomic policies around sustainability can catalyse a move by multiple high-impact sectors and eventually whole of economy, whole of finance and investment and all jobs towards becoming green, circular and inclusive. Addressing the root causes of unsustainable development determines the effectiveness of downstream efforts to green high-impact economic sectors. Inclusive and just economic transformation can grow jobs, income and prosperity for all when driven by solution-oriented policies and investments.

67. Addressing the financing gap for sustainable development, especially for the transition towards sustainable consumption and production, remains a complex and pressing challenge. Public finance plays a critical role in bridging the financing gap and creating an enabling environment for private sector investments. Effective fiscal policy and strong public finance systems can influence the cost of borrowing and make sustainable investments more attractive. However, without addressing the crippling debt issue which exacerbates the difficulties of access to affordable financing for sustainable development, this financing gap will translate into a lasting development deficit for many nations, especially the least developing countries.

¹⁵ International Renewable Energy Agency (IRENA), *Renewable Energy and Jobs: Annual Review 2020* (Abu Dhabi, 2020).