



Chief Executives Board for Coordination

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Report of the High-level Committee on Programmes at its forty-ninth session

(United Nations Headquarters, New York, 1 and 2 April 2025)

I. Introduction

1. The High-level Committee on Programmes (HLCP) of the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination (CEB) held its forty-ninth session at United Nations Headquarters on 1 and 2 April 2025. The agenda of the session and the list of participants are contained in annexes I and II, respectively, to the present report.

2. In opening the session, the Chair of the Committee, the Under-Secretary-General and Executive Director of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), Inger Andersen, observed that HLCP was meeting at a complex and challenging time for the United Nations system. Factors such as funding constraints and the increased questioning of United Nations norms and standards were affecting each organization differently, leading entities to act and adapt as appropriate to their circumstances. The Chair observed that the Committee provided a forum to promote solidarity among member entities and would continue to bring the United Nations system together around key challenges facing the world.

3. The Chair proceeded to outline the agenda for the session, during which members would have the opportunity to reflect on the challenges confronting the United Nations system and the opportunities presented by discussing the UN80 Initiative launched by the Secretary-General; engage in a foresight exercise exploring megatrends, risks, interconnectedness and prevention; consider proposals to enhance collaboration and coordination on demographic change for sustainable development and culture for sustainable development; approve an updated version of the United Nations system common messages for the twenty-ninth and thirtieth sessions of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change; and provide guidance to inform efforts to develop a United Nations system common approach to prevent and address transnational organized crime.

II. UN80 Initiative

4. Recalling her opening remarks, the Chair indicated that the first item on the agenda provided an opportunity for members to reflect on the effects of the current geopolitical environment on their organizations and ways to mitigate the related



impacts on policy and programme implementation. HLCP provided a platform to inform strategic responses by individual entities and to help unite the United Nations system in challenging circumstances. The Committee's discussion would have particular relevance in the context of the UN80 Initiative launched by the Secretary-General in March 2025. The Chair would bring pertinent points made by Committee members at the current session to the attention of CEB and the Chair of the UN80 Initiative Task Force. The High-level Committee on Management (HLCM) would also contribute to the UN80 Initiative through its discussion on possible measures to improve efficiency at its forty-ninth session (3 and 4 April 2025).

5. Members engaged in a frank and forward-looking discussion, describing challenges to mandate delivery, immediate and longer-term steps to sustain critical programme delivery, and pressures on the normative agenda, as well as reflecting on the role of HLCP to bring the system together to navigate current complexities.

6. In the present context, members saw a range of threats to the work, reputation and funding of the United Nations, and to the lives of people that it serves, and called for solidarity and unity. It was observed that a new development cooperation paradigm was emerging – among other things characterized by substantially less international aid. Members noted that humanitarian and development funding had been trending downward for some time across a range of donors. Some entities had already been preparing for leaner budgets through strategic planning and other processes. Many, however, had been forced to take abrupt action precipitated by the recent funding cuts and changes in donor policy.

7. While not all entities had been affected in the same ways or with the same intensity – due to different mandates, operating modalities and funding models – adverse effects were nevertheless felt across the United Nations system in the policy and programme areas. Members feared that two decades' worth of progress on sustainable development and important gains that had been achieved under the humanitarian and peace and security pillars were now widely threatened. Among the concerns were loss of capacity at country level that jeopardized vital policy work and curbed programme delivery, with severe impacts anticipated, in particular in humanitarian settings, in health-related interventions and in projects and programming supporting women and girls.

8. Members described an array of actions that their organizations were taking or considering taking in a range of areas to adapt to the immediate situation, protect gains and position entities to operate in a more financially constrained environment going forward. The need for internal review and carefully managed reform was acknowledged in the face of declining financing. To fill gaps that were expected to arise as a consequence, members named a number of possible mitigating actions, including: re-focusing on core mandates, rationalizing programme delivery, intensifying coordination, increasing joint programming, seeking synergies with sister United Nations organizations with complementary expertise, and exploring the merger of functionalities across different entities. Strengthening and building new partnerships with actors outside of the United Nations, such as private enterprises and non-governmental organizations, would also be needed.

9. To champion multilateralism and bolster support for the United Nations, members identified the need to tell the United Nations' story better, in ways that were concrete and relatable; to make the economic and business case for the United Nations, including on impact, efficiency and value-for-money; to combat misinformation and disinformation through collaborative, coordinated communication efforts; and to better mobilize alliances, coalitions and surrogates' voices.

10. Members identified efforts to both find new sources of finance and cut costs. Specifically, several members indicated that their entities were seeking to expand and

diversify their funding base and were exploring new funding models. In parallel, organizations were taking a range of cost-saving actions relating to reducing posts, consolidating and repurposing teams, changing staffing profiles, looking for contractual modalities that support a more nimble response, relocating personnel nearer to operations in regions and countries, closing premises and offices, co-locating with other entities, and improving operational efficiency and agility. Time-bound programming and sunset provisions were also being examined as options to manage future expenditure.

11. In the pursuit of savings, members stressed the imperative for policy and programming prerogatives to drive decisions on efficiencies in management and operations, such as those being considered in individual organizations and by HLCM.

12. As budgets were coming under greater pressure, United Nations principles and goals were also increasingly being challenged by various actors in an array of settings across the United Nations system, undermining the normative agenda and challenging policy implementation. Members agreed that the United Nations system needed to be united in upholding core values and principles, among them human rights, equality and non-discrimination. Actions proposed to safeguard the normative framework included: sharing responsibility for coherent, consistent and principled advocacy on United Nations values; using data and evidence to defend the normative agenda; and collaborating with non-State actors to cultivate values diplomacy for use in various contexts, including humanitarian and environmental.

13. There was a shared sense that, as United Nations system entities navigated the changes in international cooperation, the mandate of HLCP to promote coordination and policy coherence in the programme area was even more vital. Members felt that the Committee provided a forum to engage strategically to:

- Uphold and advocate for United Nations values and normative standards
- Solve shared problems and enhance the effectiveness of the United Nations system through joint processes and the implementation of products endorsed at the highest level of United Nations leadership
- Forge new and deeper partnerships within and across the United Nations system to leverage entities' comparative advantages and collaborate to fill gaps created by resource constraints
- Advance a common narrative on the United Nations value proposition and its ability to adapt to evolving circumstances
- Share experiences and lessons to help organizations effectively cope with the changing environment.

14. Specifically, it was suggested that HLCP could provide a forum for dialogue within the United Nations system on the emerging paradigm shift in development cooperation and how organizations could effectively operate within it.

15. Reflecting on members' interventions, the Chair underscored the view that HLCP, with its coordination mandate, had an important role to bring United Nations system organizations together as they negotiated the shifting political and financial landscape. In so doing, it would contribute to thinking on how to strengthen effectiveness and efficiency as foreseen by the UN80 Initiative. Furthermore, she emphasized the Committee's position that a collective effort to protect fundamental values was essential. At the current juncture, the United Nations system had to stand together, with each entity playing its part according to its strengths and mandate.

III. Follow-up to the High-level Committee on Programmes scoping discussion at its forty-eighth session

16. The Chair recalled that during its forty-eighth session, the Committee had engaged in a scoping discussion aimed at identifying potential opportunities for the United Nations system to work together through HLCP on both near- and medium-term issues, notably in support of key outcomes of the Summit of the Future and their impact on the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals. Highlighting that the scoping process had helped in identifying a range of opportunities for engagement, she noted that, following consultations between the HLCP Secretariat and various HLCP representatives, three topics had emerged as suitable for the Committee's consideration at the forty-ninth session, namely: prevention, demographic change and culture for sustainable development.

A. Foresight exercise: from analysis to action – exploring megatrends, risks, interconnectedness and prevention

17. The Chair invited members to engage in a foresight exercise on the theme “From analysis to action – exploring megatrends, risks, interconnectedness and prevention”, recalling that the scoping discussion at the Committee's forty-eighth session had identified foresight and prevention as critical priorities for the United Nations. She emphasized the need to build foresight capabilities to better anticipate and respond to global challenges, particularly in the light of increasing uncertainty and interconnected crises. The objective of the exercise was to generate insights into megatrends and their interlinkages, and to identify opportunities for collective action within the United Nations system to enhance coordination for fostering prevention and risk-informed action. The Chair welcomed the moderators, the Head and Deputy Head of the United Nations Futures Lab, Chris Earney and Alana Poole, respectively, as well as the Director of the Strategic Planning and Monitoring Unit of the Executive Office of the Secretary-General, Ayaka Suzuki, who would introduce key findings from the forthcoming United Nations Global Risk Report.

18. In her scene-setting remarks, Ms. Suzuki provided an overview of the interconnected nature of global risks, highlighting their centrality for global stability. Among the critical risks identified in the report, for which international institutions remained unprepared, were misinformation and disinformation, climate change and natural resource shortages, new pandemics, mass movements of people, as well as cybersecurity and other threats in the technology cluster. While some risks were already manifesting themselves, they remained insufficiently addressed due to weak governance, political impasse and lack of political will and poor prioritization of risks. Ms. Suzuki stressed that multilateralism and multi-government action were perceived as the most effective response to counter and mitigate those risks, all of which required collective action. She also highlighted the growing role of strategic foresight, which was a key component of the Secretary-General's vision for a UN 2.0, along with data, digital transformation, innovation and behavioural science. Strategic foresight was helping policymakers and the United Nations system to navigate cascading and interlinked risks and complex vulnerabilities with a view to fostering collaborative global action. United Nations entities were increasingly integrating foresight in their strategic planning process as part of the UN 2.0 vision. In this context, the Director noted the particular value of strategic foresight in bringing data to life by translating complex trends into human-centred narratives and enhancing the understanding of how challenges and solutions could reinforce each other. Ms. Suzuki concluded by presenting four possible future scenarios outlined in the report, which

were designed to help guide policymakers and the United Nations system in making informed decisions today to foster a more resilient future.

19. The Committee subsequently engaged in a guided foresight exercise that included horizon scanning and backcasting methodologies to map global trends and their interlinkages, and to explore concrete opportunities for the United Nations system to foster prevention and risk-informed decision-making and action. Members clustered and analysed signals, trends and drivers of change, identifying the most pertinent issues affecting the work of the United Nations system. Key risks and challenges highlighted by participants were: weakening trust in international institutions; political fragmentation, rising populism and geopolitical tensions; shifts in global alliances and erosion of traditional global governance norms; economic instability and rising inequality; climate threats; artificial intelligence and other frontier technologies; misinformation and disinformation; the emergence of new economic power centres and intensified resource competition; growing influence of middle powers and non-State actors in shaping global diplomacy; reduction in donor funding, aid and increased protectionism; and increased military expenditures.

20. Building on these insights, members engaged in a discussion on different approaches within the United Nations system to managing risks, responding to complex interlinked global challenges and coping with uncertainty and volatility on the basis of presentations by the United Nations Development Programme, the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs and the Peacebuilding Support Office of the United Nations Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs.

21. Concerning the linkages between megatrends and their impact on the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals, it was observed that compounding and interlinked risks were overwhelming existing national, regional and global systems and institutions that were not designed to deal with a “perfect storm” of risks. Government responses to risks were often sectoral and focused on short-term fixes to address challenges that were decidedly multifaceted and long-term. The unprecedented complexity of global risks and trends combined with weak responses endangered sustainable development progress and threatened to roll back development gains. The forthcoming report by the United Nations Development Programme entitled “Development at risk” made the case that the new risk environment demanded a new approach to risk and risk management. Risk and uncertainty could unleash innovation and unlock historical development opportunities. Human agency played a critical role in navigating complex political, economic and environmental challenges and for adapting to change by actively shaping outcomes and envisioning a more positive future.

22. In the humanitarian field, foresight and risk-informed planning were used to predict hazards to prevent or reduce acute humanitarian impacts. Anticipatory action facilitated by the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs combined three elements: forecast-based triggers, pre-agreed activities and pre-arranged financing. The approach helped communities to be better prepared and become more resilient in the face of disaster. Better alignment between preparedness, funding and action across humanitarian, development and climate actors was needed, and greater interagency collaboration on data would be essential to facilitate shared analysis and collective action.

23. In the area of peace and security, the changing nature of prevention and peacebuilding was noted. This required the United Nations system to enhance utilization of the tools and mechanism of the United Nations’ peacebuilding architecture, notably the Peacebuilding Commission and the Peacebuilding Fund. Prevention and peacebuilding required collaboration with a wide range of actors, in

particular United Nations system entities. The Peacebuilding Commission provided a forum for entities to engage with countries to address the linkages between sustainable development and peacebuilding and was, hence, an important instrument for dialogue, partnerships and cross-pillar collaboration. The Peacebuilding Fund was another tool for promoting coherence and supporting prevention efforts at the local community level and to address cross-border issues. Interagency cooperation through an inclusive multi-stakeholder approach involving local communities, civil society, national Governments, the private sector and the broader United Nations system, including the international financial institutions, was seen as essential for advancing prevention, peace and sustainable development.

24. Building on the reflections and examples provided by the presenters on ways for the United Nations system to respond to global risks and uncertainties, members identified a range of actions the United Nations system could take to foster prevention and risk-informed action. Members emphasized the need to move beyond analytical exercises and embed foresight into decision-making, budgetary processes and planning cycles. A cultural shift was also needed to move from reactive to proactive problem-solving and from short-term responses to long-term planning and positioning. Essential to this behavioural shift was the sharing of data. It would unleash unique capacities such as interagency scenario planning, unlock collective intelligence, foster agility and enhance the United Nations system's capacity to navigate complex and interconnected risks. Concurrently, the absence of shared frameworks, harmonized strategies and a common vocabulary – in particular around prevention – limited the United Nations system's capacity to effectively mitigate risks and drive risk-informed decision-making and prevention. Therefore, better collaboration and coordination, shared use of data and innovation and narrative clarity regarding values and principles were key to the United Nations endurance in a rapidly evolving global context. Joint foresight labs, cross-agency scenario planning hubs, and interoperable data platforms were seen as foundational infrastructure through which the United Nations system could collaborate and effect much needed risk-informed change in support of countries' sustainable development efforts and priorities.

25. In conclusion, the Chair thanked the moderators for skilfully guiding the Committee through the foresight exercise, the presenters for sharing insightful findings and approaches and the participants for their energetic engagement and thoughtful contributions. She noted the critical importance of data for foresight and for analysing risks and megatrends, and their interconnectedness. Accessibility, compatibility and disaggregation of data remained a challenge and an area in need of greater United Nations system collaboration. Remarking on the Secretary-General's leadership in advancing foresight and futures thinking through his UN 2.0 vision, the Chair observed that foresight was now being more widely used in the United Nations system. Within the context of HLCP, she saw merit in integrating foresight into the work carried out under the workstreams on transnational organized crime and demographic change for sustainable development and in applying futures-thinking in the Committee's efforts to enhance policy coherence and coordination in those areas.

B. Demographic change for sustainable development

26. The Chair highlighted that during the scoping discussion at its forty-eighth session, members recognized the importance of examining the consequences of demographic change and population dynamics, including shifting population age structures. She emphasized that demographic change was a critical megatrend affecting all aspects of sustainable development, with shifting demographics – such as rapid population growth in some regions and ageing populations in others –

reshaping global development needs and priorities. The Chair introduced the two presenters for the agenda item: the Assistant Secretary-General and Deputy Executive Director (Programme) of the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), Diene Keita, and the Chief of the Population and Development Branch of UNFPA, Alessio Cangiano, and drew members' attention to the discussion paper that would anchor the discussion.

27. Introducing the item, Ms. Keita emphasized the need for a system-wide approach to demographic change, recognizing the profound impact of demographic shifts – such as population growth, population ageing, and population decline – on sustainable development, climate, economic stability, and social policy. Citing recent United Nations reports identifying demographic trends as key factors influencing global development, she stressed that countries were increasingly seeking United Nations assistance to address a range of concerns, including those related to fertility rates, population decline, and demographic transitions. While reaffirming the role of UNFPA to provide technical and programmatic support, Ms. Keita nonetheless called for strengthened cooperation among United Nations system entities to provide adequate, comprehensive and effective responses, ensuring that demographic insights contributed to future policy discussions on sustainable development and social policies. She concluded by urging a more integrated United Nations system response to demographic change, to better support Member States in achieving their development goals.

28. Mr. Cangiano, presenting the discussion paper, outlined key demographic trends, noting that global population growth was slowing and increasingly concentrated in fewer countries, while many others faced population decline and unprecedentedly low fertility rates. He emphasized the rapid pace of population ageing in middle-income countries, which would require timely adaptations in social systems, infrastructure, society and economies. Mr. Cangiano also pointed out that regular migration was not effectively working as a balancing mechanism between countries with youthful and growing populations and countries with shrinking labour forces and ageing populations. In the meantime, forced displacement had reached record levels. He expressed concern over the insufficient integration of demographic factors into national development strategies and policies, noting the urgency of implementing necessary structural reforms in various sectors; and over debates around gender, sexual and reproductive health and migration issues. He noted the key role of the United Nations Commission on Population and Development, that has recently reaffirmed that demographic shifts would continue shaping the world for present and future generations; and of other relevant intergovernmental mechanisms such as the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration, as well as several inter-agency networks and groups to coordinate initiatives in specific policy areas, such as migration, ageing, health or population data. He further highlighted that meaningful work could be developed under the remit of HLCP to provide the strategic foundation for a more coherent support to Member States and a more effective integration of demographic change in the post-2030 development agenda. Mr. Cangiano concluded by proposing the establishment of a time-bound working group to enhance system-wide policy coherence and coordination on demographic change.

29. In the ensuing discussion, members recognized demographic change as a transformative megatrend affecting all pillars of sustainable development, with far-reaching implications for economic, social, and environmental outcomes. The intersections between demographic change and poverty, inequality, gender, climate vulnerability, and peace were highlighted, with calls to maintain a strong development lens across all efforts. Several entities emphasized the need for a coherent and coordinated United Nations system response, underscoring that shifting population structures – due to ageing, declining fertility, and growing or mobile populations –

required holistic, integrated, and anticipatory policy approaches. The forthcoming Second World Summit for Social Development was identified as a timely opportunity to elevate the issue of demographic change and align action by the United Nations with broader global frameworks, including the Global Compact for Migration and the Pact for the Future.

30. A number of members pointed to increasing divergence in population dynamics across countries and regions, including contexts of demographically young populations, depopulation and ageing societies. These shifts were reshaping vulnerabilities, especially in fragile settings and among displaced populations, requiring differentiated policy responses that considered evolving care needs, labour market participation and social protection systems. The care economy, in particular in ageing societies, required urgent reform, with a shift away from care as a charitable activity toward one that supported human capital and social resilience. Ageing and life-course transitions were framed as both challenges and opportunities, as members stressed the need to invest in lifelong learning, technical and vocational training, and future-oriented skills to ensure that older people would remain active and that younger generations were equipped for evolving labour markets. The disproportionate burden carried by older women and vulnerable groups was raised as a key equity concern. Addressing the social determinants of health and placing health equity at the centre of demographic strategies were seen as critical.

31. Migration and forced displacement were recognized as integral components of demographic shifts, often not sufficiently addressed in national data and policy frameworks. Members highlighted the growing share of displaced populations globally and called for integrating migration more systematically into development strategies. The need for investment in rural services to prevent forced migration, and for inclusive urban planning that addressed informal settlements and the needs of young people, was also underlined. Urbanization and rural-to-urban migration were cited as critical dimensions of demographic change, necessitating investments in inclusive services, housing and balanced territorial development.

32. Throughout the discussion, members emphasized the need to foster intergenerational solidarity, inclusive governance, and forward-looking social policies. The importance of better connecting demographic data and analysis with policymaking across key sectors – including climate, health, technology and economic planning – was also underlined. Practical cooperation with non-State actors and private sector partners was encouraged, particularly in areas such as digital skills, data and innovation. The importance of vertical integration of demographic policies at both the national and regional levels was also noted as key to driving long-term impact.

33. There was broad support for the establishment of a time-bound task team to strengthen system-wide coordination on demographic change. Members recommended that the mechanism be composed of a small group of entities who maintain a clear and focused scope, centred on priority themes such as ageing, urbanization, youth transitions, care systems and improved data integration, with a strong emphasis on delivering practical outputs. The importance of avoiding duplication by building on existing structures and concentrating on a limited set of high-impact areas was also highlighted.

34. Recognizing that demographic change was relevant to the mandates of all members, Mr. Cangiano expressed appreciation for the wide support voiced for the proposal by UNFPA. He highlighted the risk that the work on demographic change could become too broad and, therefore, emphasized the need to identify clear entry points through which inter-agency collaboration could produce tangible outcomes. In view of the resource constraints confronting the United Nations system, Mr. Cangiano

noted the imperative to streamline efforts, building on existing work ongoing within entities.

35. Ms. Keita expressed gratitude for the members' rich insights and overwhelming support. She acknowledged the calls for actionable deliverables and an efficient process to carry the work forward through HLCP. Ms. Keita commended the Committee for embodying the collaborative approach demanded in the current environment, which positioned it well to contribute to the UN80 Initiative. She underscored the necessity for the United Nations system to speak with one voice, on demographic change and other issues, particularly in the context of upcoming events and summits.

36. The Chair thanked the Committee for the valuable initial discussion, recognizing the broad interest in the topic and breadth of insights shared. She reiterated that, as members had suggested, a small group of entities should move swiftly to identify key entry points and high-impact areas that could deliver tangible results. The Chair requested UNFPA, with support of the HLCP Secretariat, to establish a task team to advance this workstream.

Conclusions

37. **The Committee recognized the need for enhancing United Nations system-wide understanding, coherence and coordination on the issue of demographic change, and decided to establish a time-bound task team on demographic change, under the leadership of UNFPA and other interested entities.**

38. **The Committee requested the task team to develop a draft proposal for steps that could be taken towards greater system-wide policy coherence and programmatic coordination regarding demographic change for sustainable development, for consideration by HLCP at its intersessional meeting.**

C. Culture for sustainable development

39. The Chair invited the Committee to turn its attention to the agenda item on culture for sustainable development, noting that there was growing momentum at regional and international levels towards recognizing culture's role as a driver for sustainable development. Those efforts culminated in Member States' commitment in the Pact for the Future to integrate culture into economic, social and environmental development policies. She recalled that CEB, at its second regular session of 2024, reflected on multilateral priorities for the next two years and, in that context, noted that strengthening the focus of the United Nations system on culture as an integral component of sustainable development merited urgent attention. The Chair encouraged members to share observations and experiences on how culture contributed to advancing sustainable development within each entity's mandate and programmatic activities, and to identify possible entry points for broader United Nations system collaboration in the area. Recognizing the role of United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization in advancing culture for sustainable development, the Chair invited the Assistant Director-General for Culture of UNESCO, Mr. Ernesto Ottone, to take the floor.

40. In introducing the background paper, Mr. Ottone highlighted that culture and sustainable development were interconnected across various sectors and mandates of the United Nations system. Culture was an essential driver of transformation, cohesion, equity and development. Serving as a unifying force and a bridge between communities and nations, culture fostered mutual understanding and enhanced collaboration to protect what was common and laid the foundation for peaceful coexistence. The significant setbacks facing the Sustainable Development Goals

required equity-driven development models that were rooted in local realities and reflected the world's cultural diversity and that allowed for greater localization of development plans through context-relevant, people-centred approaches. The need for integrating culture into sustainable development policies had been increasingly recognized by Member States in regional and international policy-setting fora, including the General Assembly, the high-level political forum on sustainable development and the Pact for the Future.

41. Looking towards 2030 and beyond, Mr. Ottone noted the growing calls from Member States for a standalone goal on culture to place culture at the centre of sustainable development and fully harness its potential as a strategic policy investment. Mr. Ottone invited the United Nations system to support the inclusion of culture in discussions on the 2030 Agenda and beyond and to participate in the second UNESCO World Conference on Cultural Policies and Sustainable Development, (MONDIACULT 2025), to be held in Barcelona, Spain, from 29 September to 1 October 2025. He further informed members that a digital library would be made available ahead of the Conference with the aim of providing Member States and other stakeholders with insights on how to harness culture for sustainable development, and he invited Committee members to contribute to that effort. In concluding, Mr. Ottone emphasized the invaluable role of culture in promoting perspectives rooted in respect for diversity, human rights and inclusive multilateralism; perspectives that were essential for addressing today's complex global challenges.

42. In the ensuing discussion, members highlighted the important role of culture in underpinning the Sustainable Development Goals, in particular in the areas of health, education, decent work and social inclusion. Effectiveness and sustainability of development interventions in those and other sectors were dependent on the integration of community perspectives and local languages in programme design and delivery. This would ensure that programme implementation was culturally sensitive and to avoid a one-size-fits-all approach. To that end, it was important to directly work with local governments and communities to achieve positive outcomes.

43. Understanding local cultures was also an important aspect of peacebuilding efforts. In post-conflict contexts, preserving or restoring cultural heritage provided communities with a sense of history and identity, and cultural understanding served as an enabler for reconciliation and dialogue and facilitated the reframing of traditional gender roles. Understanding cultural sensitivities was also fundamental for successfully negotiating with parties to a conflict to gain access to communities in need. Members highlighted the challenges faced by displaced persons in preserving their culture, including skills, norms and storytelling traditions, all of which needed to be taken into account in protection efforts.

44. Culture played a significant role in promoting social cohesion and inclusion and shaped social identity. Culture contributed to solving a wide range of sustainable development challenges from integrating migrants into host communities to addressing overconsumption. In this context, members highlighted various aspects, including Indigenous knowledge and culture, sustainable consumption and production, ecological sustainability and sustainable agriculture, the role of the cultural economy, and the need to bridge the digital divide and invest in digital literacy and skills. In times of political and economic uncertainty, culture was seen as having the potential to play a pivotal role in mitigating future risks and promoting long-term solutions.

45. In order to leverage those various aspects of culture, members highlighted new potential areas for inter-agency collaboration, such as the development of statistical methodologies and indicators for culture; the scaling up of advocacy on integrating culture in development strategies and policies, in line with the Pact for the Future;

and the sharing of data to facilitate the systematic incorporation of culture into development strategies, policies and cooperation frameworks as well as entities' strategic plans and programmes. Moreover, further research, including on the links between culture and employment and on how to measure the culture sector's contribution to national gross domestic product (GDP), could help to further deepen the understanding of the linkages between culture and sustainable development. The 2025 biennial review of the General Assembly resolution on promoting creative economy for sustainable development, the Second World Summit for Social Development in November 2025, and forthcoming deliberations on advancing the Sustainable Development Goals up to 2030 and beyond were noted as opportunities to advance discussions on culture as a driver of sustainable development.

46. In his concluding remarks, Mr. Ottone thanked members for sharing a broad variety of views and experiences on the role of culture in sustainable development and the delivery of entities' mandates. Noting that culture was an essential element that cut across the work of United Nations system entities, he pointed to the intersection of culture, education, science and communication and the importance of safeguarding indigenous knowledge and the inter-generational transfer of knowledge, in particular by women. He highlighted the evolution of the approach by UNESCO to safeguarding culture and heritage from one centred on reconstruction and recovery to one focused on proactive protection and prevention. Culture was fundamentally related to all aspects of the United Nations' work to advance the Sustainable Development Goals and as such, it was important for the United Nations system to continue to engage on the issue. To that end, Mr. Ottone invited entities to participate in the existing Inter-Agency Platform on Culture for Sustainable Development to continue the discussion and enrich current advocacy efforts on culture's role as driver for sustainable development and peace.

47. The Chair thanked the Committee for a very rich foundational discussion on culture and sustainable development, which helped HLCP members gain a deeper understanding of the role of culture in advancing sustainable development and as a cross-cutting issue affecting the work of the entire United Nations system. In concluding the item, she noted various efforts by United Nations system entities to integrate culture in sustainable development strategies and policies and support for strengthening inter-agency collaboration on the issue, including through an existing coordination mechanism outside of HLCP, led by UNESCO.

IV. Transnational organized crime

48. The Chair invited members to consider the item on transnational organized crime, recalling that CEB, at its first regular session of 2024, had seen a need for the United Nations system to work together more coherently to tackle that complex challenge. Following the Committee's approval at its forty-eighth session of the terms of reference for a time-bound task team on transnational organized crime, led by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), 23 entities joined the effort to produce a United Nations system common approach to prevent and address transnational organized crime.

49. The first output produced through the workstream was a mapping of the normative and operational landscape on transnational organized crime across the United Nations system, the results of which were provided to the Committee as background to its deliberations at the present session. The Chair informed members that two other outputs that had been foreseen for the first phase of work – a conceptual framework capturing the multiple dimensions of transnational organized crime and an outline for the common approach – had been delayed.

50. The Chief of Staff to the Executive Director of UNODC, Jeremy Douglas, reported briefly on the activities of the task team since its formation in November 2024. He informed the Committee that the expert group assembled to provide input to the workstream had met once, virtually, and that the first of three regional field dialogues had taken place in February. Expressing appreciation for the 25 survey responses received, Mr. Douglas presented an overview of the results of the mapping, focusing on key takeaways, as well as gaps and challenges identified.

51. Looking ahead, Mr. Douglas reiterated the aim of the task team to deliver the common approach for the Committee's consideration at its fiftieth session, in keeping with the original timeline. As building blocks towards the common approach, the task team would first present drafts of the conceptual framework and provisional outline for the common approach to HLCP for feedback. The work was expected to benefit from insights arising from the two additional field dialogues, which would be completed by the end of April, and the input of the expert group, which would meet again in May.

52. Complementing the presentation by Mr. Douglas, the Director of the Division for Policy Analysis and Public Affairs of UNODC, Candice Welsch, presented highlights of the field dialogue for Ecuador and the Andean Region, organized by the UNODC Regional Office for the Andean Region and the Southern Cone based in Bogota. It was held on 24 February 2025 in Quito, in a hybrid format, with over 50 participants. Over the course of the day-long discussion, participants expressed a strong interest in increasing joint work on transnational organized crime with a view to having a more comprehensive response supported by different United Nations system entities across the region. The forthcoming report from the dialogue would be provided to the task team to enrich its work. Ms. Welsch saw potential for the forthcoming common approach to guide relevant policies and positively affect work on transnational organized crime at the local level.

53. In the discussion that followed, members expressed appreciation for the UNODC leadership of the task team and for providing the update on its work, the importance of which was widely recognized. Given the multidimensional nature of the issue, the need to continue to enhance collaboration with UNODC was emphasized. Ensuring linkages between the HLCP task team and coordination mechanisms working in related areas, such as those in counterterrorism and migration, was also recommended. The regional dialogues were welcomed as opportunities to engage resident coordinators and country teams in the initiative.

54. Seen as providing a good starting point to understand the existing landscape, the results of the mapping exercise were well received. It was observed that the strength of the collective response to transnational organized crime was rooted in the diversity of mandates found across the United Nations system. In that regard, more effective and efficient inter-agency coordination could be facilitated through a deeper understanding of each institution's strengths and comparative advantages, building on the mapping results.

55. Members suggested various elements to be considered for inclusion in the forthcoming common approach to prevent and address transnational organized crime. Many emphasized the need to think about the issue holistically, going beyond a criminal justice lens and, rather, treating transnational organized crime as a governance issue. The challenge was much more than a security matter; it posed an economic threat with far-reaching costs. It was felt that the common approach could be helpful in providing harmonized language, underpinned by foundational norms and standards, including human rights. The approach could address issues of transparency, accountability, sustainability and resilience as integral to tackling the challenges around transnational organized crime. The need for a value chain approach, with a

focus on both supply and demand sides, was underscored. Strengthening protection systems to ensure trust in public institutions was also seen as vital, for example for victims of trafficking in persons. It was felt that the approach should carefully consider triggers of criminal liability, especially with respect to vulnerable communities and indigenous peoples. Other areas that members identified to potentially be addressed in the common approach included the financing and profitability of transnational organized crime, money laundering, trafficking in small arms and light weapons, natural resources, gangs as transboundary criminals and racial justice.

56. In addition, members highlighted a variety of opportunities for greater inter-agency coordination that might be incorporated in the common approach, including in research and analysis, resource mobilization, joint advocacy, and support to legislative and policy reform. Collaboration in data generation, collection, sharing and analysis was widely seen as an important foundation to advocate for strategic evidence-based approaches, as well as an opportunity to help fill the reporting gap on Sustainable Development Goal indicator 16.4.1. A unified platform could support real-time analysis and inform action. In that context, several entities offered to provide access to a range of relevant data sets. The need for better coordination and information-sharing in the context of capacity-building support to Governments on transnational organized crime was also raised and, in that regard, an online capacity development coordination platform was offered for possible expansion to a wider set of entities.

57. At the country level, the possibility of expanding the scope of thematic groups in the United Nations country teams, such as those on the rule of law, governance, and financing, to incorporate links to transnational organized crime was put forward. Joint programming to address the nexus of economic development and crime prevention could be strengthened. In that vein, joint risk assessments could also be useful to anticipate and mitigate a variety of salient threats. Furthermore, recognizing that meaningful results on transnational organized crime required partnership, the point was made that coordination had to extend beyond the United Nations system.

58. In terms of future trends that the common approach needed to take into account, members pointed to the need for deeper awareness and understanding of the use of emerging technology in transnational organized crime, as well as of the application of innovative technologies, such as artificial intelligence and biometric systems, to monitor and counter criminal activities.

59. Mr. Douglas thanked members for their support to the workstream and for their inputs to guide the development of the common approach. He observed that data was a recurrent theme in the interventions and affirmed that it would be a key aspect of the work. He envisioned the task team proposing how the United Nations system could work together to develop data that would meaningfully change the discourse and help inform government responses to transnational organized crime. Recognizing the short timeline to deliver the common approach, Mr. Douglas expressed appreciation for the organizations' continued engagement.

60. The Chair acknowledged the strong and positive reactions to the presentation by UNODC on the work of the task team and thanked HLCP member entities for engaging in the process. She echoed words of appreciation that, despite unforeseen setbacks, UNODC and the task team were committed to deliver the United Nations system common approach to prevent and address transnational organized crime on time, at the fiftieth session of HLCP in October 2025. In order to provide HLCP members with the opportunity to continue to help shape the common approach, the Chair proposed to convene a virtual intersessional meeting to discuss the conceptual framework and provisional outline.

Conclusion

61. **The Committee decided to convene a virtual intersessional meeting in June 2025 to consider the draft conceptual framework capturing the multiple dimensions of transnational organized crime and the provisional outline for the United Nations system common approach to prevent and address transnational organized crime.**

V. Climate change: United Nations system contribution to the twenty-ninth and thirtieth sessions of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change

62. The Chair recalled that HLCP, at an intersessional meeting in July 2024, had approved and CEB subsequently endorsed a set of United Nations system common messages for the twenty-ninth and thirtieth sessions of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, in response to the request by the Secretary-General and the Board for a coherent and strategic contribution for those sessions. She noted that the common messages had been widely distributed and had proven useful for the United Nations system in its engagement at the Conference of the Parties in Baku. At its forty-eighth session, HLCP requested its working group on climate to revisit and, if necessary, update the common messages ahead of the thirtieth session. Expressing her appreciation to the working group and its co-leads, the Chair welcomed the presenters the Secretary-General's Special Adviser on Climate Action and Just Transition, Mr. Selwin Hart, and the Senior Director, Programmes Coordination, United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), Mr. Daniele Violetti, and invited them to provide an overview of salient outcomes and expectations from the twenty-ninth session of the Conference of the Parties for the thirtieth session of the Conference of the Parties, and introduce the revised common messages.

63. In his intervention, Mr. Violetti reminded the Committee of the three key documents that were expected to be received from parties to the Convention and the Paris Agreement ahead of the thirtieth session of the Conference of the Parties, namely their nationally determined contributions, biennial transparency reports and national adaptation plans, which together were essential in assessing and determining progress towards achieving the goals of the Paris Agreement. In his outlook on priorities for the thirtieth session in Belem, Brazil, he drew attention to the need to finalize the indicators for the global goal on adaptation, the "Baku to Belém road map to \$1.3 trillion" to unlock climate finance, a just transition work programme, and a technology implementation programme to leverage technological solutions for the implementation of the Paris Agreement. Mr. Violetti underscored that the common messages had been used widely, contributing to the global narrative in Baku, and that the revised version contained light updates to reflect the outcomes of the twenty-ninth session of the Conference of the Parties.

64. Complementing these remarks, Mr. Hart stressed that, while the world was currently not on track to meet the goals of the Paris Agreement, important progress had been made since its adoption 10 years ago. The political environment remained challenging with backlash to climate action observed in many countries and despite scientific evidence highlighting the urgency for action. Despite these challenges, the pace of the energy transition had accelerated, with a record deployment of clean energy globally, including in developing and emerging economies. He referred to the economic and social opportunities that climate action represented and provided

examples, such as the impact of the renewable energy sector on GDP growth, job creation and energy security. He indicated that the United Nations system was working closely with the Brazilian presidency of the thirtieth Conference of the Parties and through the United Nations Development Programme's Climate Promise to support countries in their delivery of high ambition nationally determined contributions that were implementable and mobilized finance and investments.

65. In the ensuing discussion, the Committee expressed support for the updated common messages and acknowledged the critical moment for climate action and the need to maintain ambition. The new nationally determined contributions needed to be more integrated, more ambitious, more actionable, creating synergies with the sustainable development goals, and consider national financial frameworks and plans. Regarding climate action, the importance of leveraging green technology and public-private partnerships was emphasized, and reference was made to the World Intellectual Property Organization's (WIPO) online platform for technology exchange WIPO Green. It was noted that the Green Digital Action Declaration had gained broad support at the twenty-ninth session of the Conference of the Parties, and with artificial intelligence increasingly putting pressure on resources, sustainable and green digital solutions merited greater attention. It was suggested to also make use of major conferences, such as the International Conference on Financing for Development, the 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 Second World Summit for Social Development to highlight and advocate for climate action.

66. In his reaction to the discussion, Mr. Hart thanked Committee members for their comments and support and underlined the importance of working together across the system to unlock ambition and work collectively and individually with countries to help them seize the opportunities of a clean energy future. The Chair concluded the agenda item by expressing her appreciation to the working group, stressing the urgency of the common messages and inviting members to use and circulate them widely, in line with their mandate-specific messages.

Conclusion

67. **The Committee approved the updated United Nations System Common Messages for twenty-ninth and thirtieth sessions of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, contained in annex III to the present report, for onward transmission to CEB for endorsement.**

VI. Any other business

A. Update on the Secretary-General's Gender Equality Clarion Call and his progress report on the implementation of the Gender Equality Acceleration Plan

68. The Chair invited Deputy Director of the Sustainable Development Unit in the Executive Office of the Secretary-General, Ms. Lara Blanco, to update the Committee on the Gender Equality Acceleration Plan and the Secretary-General's efforts to promote gender equality.

69. Ms. Blanco introduced the Secretary-General's first progress report on the implementation of Gender Equality Acceleration Plan, highlighting actions taken by United Nations system entities in support of gender equality and the empowerment of women. The report showed growing commitment to implement the Acceleration Plan,

including through the creation of committees and platforms, enhanced engagement with civil society organizations and partnerships, and an updating of the system-wide scorecard on gender equality to reflect new priorities and enhance accountability. In addition, the Secretary-General had launched a Clarion Call for Gender Equality calling on the leadership of the United Nations system to stand united and take up all opportunities to champion gender equality, address pushbacks on gender equality, and support women rights defenders. She also informed that the Acceleration Plan secretariat was considering expanding the taskforce and working groups beyond the current membership of 43 entities to ensure broader engagement and implementation of the Acceleration Plan across the system going forward.

B. Update on the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime Children Amplified Prevention Services initiative

70. The Chair invited the Director of the Division for Policy Analysis and Public Affairs of UNODC, Candice Welsch, to provide an update on the Children Amplified Prevention Services initiative, on which the Committee had been briefed at its forty-seventh session.

71. Ms. Welsch noted that the initiative aimed at enhancing children's and adolescents' resilience by building life skills and the ability to manage risks. She connected the initiative to the Committee's work on transnational organized crime and emphasized the importance of drug use prevention as a means of youth crime prevention. Ms. Welsch reported that several countries had joined the initiative. She appreciated the strong collaboration among UNODC, UNICEF, the World Health Organization, United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat), United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women), and others in one of the pilot countries, and underlined the initiative's unique, holistic approach to drug use prevention from birth to age 18.

C. Update on the Inter-Agency Working Group on Artificial Intelligence

72. The Chair recalled that at its forty-eighth session, the Committee considered a proposal for enhancing United Nations system coordination and policy coherence in support of artificial intelligence governance, presented by the co-leads of the Inter-Agency Working Group on Artificial Intelligence. In their deliberations, members recognized the need for continued inter-agency coordination on artificial intelligence and supported the continuation of the Working Group for twelve months. Members had emphasized the need to deliver concrete and practical outputs within that timeframe and further stressed the need to be mindful of ongoing processes related to the implementation of the Global Digital Compact. Following two rounds of consultations, the revised proposal was approved by the Committee in March 2025.

73. The Chair informed the Committee that, during consultations of the revised proposal, the Secretary-General, as Chair of CEB, was informed and provided advice. Citing the establishment of new mechanisms following the adoption of the Global Digital Compact, he felt that it was logical to work in and through the Working Group on digital technologies and the Office for Digital and Emerging Technologies, noting the timebound nature and internal focus of the Inter-Agency Working Group on Artificial Intelligence. In the light of these instructions, the Chair noted that the mandate of the Working Group would not be extended beyond the fall of 2025, with a final report to be presented at the Committee's fiftieth session.

74. The Chair underscored that United Nations system coordination on artificial intelligence was expected to continue, albeit outside of HLCP, notably through the sub-working group on artificial intelligence of the Working Group on digital technologies for the Pact for the Future implementation, led by the International Telecommunication Union (ITU), UNESCO and the Office for Digital and Emerging Technologies. The Chair noted that this sub-working group was currently working with the Inter-Agency Working Group on Artificial Intelligence to channel United Nations system inputs that benefit from internal coordination to the relevant Global Digital Compact mandated processes.

75. The Chair emphasized that in sharing his guidance with the co-leads of the Working Group on Artificial Intelligence, the Secretary-General had expressed his appreciation for the efforts of the Working Group to bring the United Nations system together under the leadership of ITU and UNESCO, particularly on the ethics of artificial intelligence and on capacity-building. The Chair further expressed her appreciation for the contributions of the Working Group over the years, noting that there was still important work that needed to be delivered, and looked forward to the fiftieth session of the Committee to discuss the final report of the Working Group.

D. Dates and location of the fiftieth session of the Committee

76. It was proposed that the fiftieth session of the Committee be held at the International Atomic Energy Agency in Vienna, on 2 and 3 October 2025.

77. The Chair reiterated the offer by United Nations Environment Programme to host the Committee in Nairobi for its fifty-second session.

Conclusion

78. The Committee approved the dates and location of its fiftieth session: 2 and 3 October 2025 in Vienna.

Annex I

Agenda

1. UN80 Initiative.
2. Follow-up to the High-level Committee on Programmes scoping discussion at its forty-eighth session:
 - (a) Foresight exercise: from analysis to action – exploring megatrends, risks, interconnectedness and prevention;
 - (b) Demographic change for sustainable development;
 - (c) Culture for sustainable development.
3. Transnational organized crime.
4. Climate change: United Nations system contribution to the twenty-ninth and thirtieth sessions of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change.
5. Any other business:
 - (a) Update on the Secretary-General's Gender Equality Clarion Call and his Progress Report on the implementation of the Gender Equality Acceleration Plan;
 - (b) Update on the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime Children Amplified Prevention Services initiative;
 - (c) Update on the Inter-Agency Working Group on Artificial Intelligence;
 - (d) Dates and location of the fiftieth session of the Committee.

Annex II

List of participants

Chair: Ms. Inger Andersen (United Nations Environment Programme)

Acting Secretary: Ms. Xenia von Lilien (High-level Committee on Programmes of the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination)

<i>Entity</i>	<i>Name</i>
Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations	Beth Crawford
International Atomic Energy Agency	Constanze Westervoss
International Fund for Agricultural Development	Ron Hartman
International Labour Organization	Cynthia Samuel-Olonjuwon
International Maritime Organization	Galuh Rarasanti
International Monetary Fund	Robert Powell
International Organization for Migration	Pär Liljert
International Telecommunication Union	Ursula Wynhoven
International Trade Centre	Pamela Coke-Hamilton
Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS	Angeli Achrekar
Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees	Sajjad Malik
United Nations	
Department of Economic and Social Affairs	Lotta Tähtinen
Department of Global Communications	Robert Skinner
Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs, Peacebuilding Support Office	Awa Dabo
Development Coordination Office	Gonzalo Pizarro
Executive Office of the Secretary-General	Lara Blanco
Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs	Hansjoerg Strohmeyer
	Quynh Tran
Office for Disarmament Affairs	Gizem Sucuoglu
Office of Counter-Terrorism	Tamara Anderson
Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights	Rio Hada
Regional commissions	Thilmeeza Hussain
United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction	Sujit Mohanty
United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime	Candice Welsch

<i>Entity</i>	<i>Name</i>
	Jeremy Douglas (HLCP Task Team on Transnational Organized Crime)
United Nations Children's Fund	George Laryea-Adjei
	Carlos Acosta
United Nations Conference on Trade and Development	Juan José Martínez Badillo
	Dobrina Stoyanova Poirier
United Nations Development Programme	Marcos Neto
United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization	Ernesto Ottone (Presenter)
	Caroline Siebold
United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women)	Nyaradzayi Gumbonzvanda
United Nations Environment Programme	Ligia Noronha
	Isabella Marras
United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change secretariat	Daniele Violetti
United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat)	Andre Dzikus
United Nations Industrial Development Organization	Ralf Brede
United Nations Office for Project Services	Kirstine Damkjær
United Nations Population Fund	Diene Keita
	Alessio Cangiano
	Michael Herrmann
United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East	Natalie Boucly
United Nations System Staff College	Silke Weinlich
United Nations University	David Passarelli
	Christina McElwaine
Universal Postal Union	Elise Servat
World Bank Group	Farhad Peikar
World Food Programme	Valerie Guarnieri
World Health Organization	Igor Pokanevych
World Intellectual Property Organization	Edward Kwakwa
World Meteorological Organization	Roberta Boscolo

Guests

<i>Entity</i>	<i>Name</i>
Office of the Special Adviser on Climate Action and Just Transition	Selwin Hart
United Nations Futures Lab	Chris Earney
	Alana Poole

United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination secretariat

Maaïke Jansen

Federica Pietracci

Cheryl Stafford

Laura Ribeiro Rodrigues Pereira

Florian Wintermeyer

Laurent Mottier

Emnet Tezera Bekele

Fabienne Fon Sing

Annex III

United Nations System Common Messages for COP29 and COP30

Every fraction of a degree of warming matters. The long-term temperature goal of the Paris Agreement is still just about possible.¹

- The science is clear: **to avert the worst impacts of climate change** and preserve a liveable planet, **global warming needs to be limited** as much as possible and as a matter of urgency.
- The annually averaged global mean near-surface temperature in 2024 was $1.55^{\circ}\text{C} \pm 0.13^{\circ}\text{C}$ above the 1850–1900 average used to represent pre-industrial conditions. The year 2024 was the warmest year in the 175-year observational record, clearly surpassing the previous warmest year, 2023 at $1.45^{\circ}\text{C} \pm 0.12^{\circ}\text{C}$ above the 1850–1900 average.²
- 2024 was the first calendar year in which the annual global average temperature exceeded 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels. Such a short-term exceedance of 1.5°C is an **early sign of getting perilously close to exceeding the long-term limit** and serve as a clarion call for **increasing ambition and accelerating action in this critical decade**.
- **An annual exceedance of 1.5°C** does not mean that the world has failed to achieve the Paris Agreement’s temperature goal, which IPCC consider as a reference to **long-term temperature increase over decades**.
- At COP26, COP27, COP28, and COP29, countries expressed their firm resolve to pursue efforts to limit global warming to 1.5°C , as agreed in the Paris Agreement.
- Countries’ commitments to reduce greenhouse gas emissions under the Paris Agreement have reduced the projected global warming by the end of the 21st century from $3.7\text{--}4.8^{\circ}\text{C}$ to $2.1\text{--}2.8^{\circ}\text{C}$ or possibly even lower. While this is far from sufficient, it shows that **collective commitments under the Paris Agreement have made a difference**.
- **Every fraction of a degree of warming matters.** With every additional increment of global warming, changes in extremes, impacts and risks become larger.
- **Limiting global warming to below 1.5°C** will significantly reduce the risks, adverse impacts, and related human suffering from climate change. Failing to do so will lead to increasingly frequent and dangerous extreme weather events including heatwaves, droughts, wildfires, and heavy precipitation and flooding, with significant detrimental impacts also on food security.
- Even at current levels, climate change already has massive impacts on human rights, humanitarian needs, welfare, and dignity, particularly for those in vulnerable and marginalized situations, rocking the foundations of peace and security – as people are displaced and vital resources depleted.
- **The climate crisis is not “gender neutral”.** Women and girls are often disproportionately impacted by climate change, which amplifies existing gender inequalities and poses unique threats to their livelihoods, rights, health, and safety.

¹ See https://www.un.org/sites/un2.un.org/files/2024/04/fact_sheet_on_1.5.pdf.

² World Meteorological Organization, State of the Global Climate 2024 (Geneva, 2025).

New national climate action plans must put the world on a path to limiting global warming to 1.5°C.

- The next round of Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) – national climate action plans that every country must submit well ahead of COP30 – will determine greenhouse gas emissions for the coming years. They must align with limiting global warming to 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels.
- The development of these new NDCs can provide the guiding framework and clarity to rally cross-government and non-state actors to take immediate action to decarbonize their economies, cut greenhouse gas emissions and build resilience to climate impacts.
- The COP28 global stocktake outcome provided clear guidance for the next generation of NDCs. In 2025, every country must submit a new NDC that is 1.5°C-aligned and economy-wide, providing absolute emissions reduction targets for 2030 and 2035, covering all greenhouse gases and all sectors: energy, agriculture, transport, land use, industry (including reference to services sectors such as tourism when appropriate), and waste.
- These targets should be supported by credible and just transition pathways by sector, concrete and evidence-based/informed policies, and financing and other means-of-implementation needs, providing investors with clarity and certainty on the future direction of travel and priority areas.
- These plans must also **detail adaptation priorities, investments and other means-of-implementation (including technology) needs** which build resilience, protect critical sectors, infrastructure and people from climate impacts, and support and align with National Adaptation Planning processes. Governments should coordinate across all relevant ministries, and also work with finance, industry, transport, agriculture, subnational actors, Indigenous Peoples, the scientific community, the productive/business sector, and civil society, including women, children and youth groups, trade unions, human rights defenders and environmental activists, to design and implement these NDCs. **Attention to broad and meaningful participation of all relevant actors in decision-making widens support for the transformative changes.**
- If done right, **these climate plans would be aligned with national development priorities, and double as investment plans**, spurring socio-economic development, eradicating poverty, and achieving the Sustainable Development Goals.
- NDCs should be informed by **science and standardized data** to ensure the best and most feasible mitigation and adaptation actions underpinned by human rights, including gender equality.
- The Secretary-General has tasked UNDP to leverage its “**Climate Promise**” infrastructure to drive coordinated UN support to developing countries in the preparation of their NDCs. This process aims to leverage, mobilize, and synergize the diverse expertise and capacity and provide the space for the full participation of all entities across the UN system, including by harnessing the convening role of Resident Coordinators.
- Transparency in implementing the NDCs is equally important. Therefore, it is crucial that countries submit **Biennial Transparency Reports** covering all emissions and all sectors as the agreed means of tracking progress on the implementation of NDCs and showing collective progress towards 1.5°C.

The case for climate action has never been clearer

- **Climate action yields significant returns – creating jobs, investment, and business opportunities. The clean energy sector alone is already contributing significantly to GDP growth in many countries across the world.** The Network for Greening the Financial System³ has estimated that an orderly transition to net zero by 2050 could result in global GDP being 7% higher than under current policies, with the savings from avoided damages greatly outweighing investment costs. **Renewable energy is cheaper:** Nearly all new renewable power installed (81%) was cheaper⁴ than fossil fuel alternatives in 2023. On average, around the world, electricity from solar energy was 56% cheaper than power from fossil fuels. **Climate action creates more jobs:** There already are more jobs⁵ in clean energy than in fossil fuels, as growing investment in clean energy technologies – such as solar panels, windmills, batteries and electric vehicles – is driving demand for new workers in every region of the world. Every dollar invested in renewable energy creates three times more jobs⁶ than in the fossil fuel industry. Currently over 60 million people are engaged in nature-based solutions activities and these can generate up to 32 million new jobs by 2030⁷.
- **The economic opportunities in increasing climate resilience** are already estimated to be USD18 trillion. Every dollar invested in adaptation can return up to USD10⁸. Globally, a USD1.8 trillion investment in early warning systems, climate-resilient infrastructure, improved dryland agriculture, global mangrove protection and resilient water resources could generate USD7.1 trillion in avoided costs and social and environmental benefits⁹.
- **Building resilience and reducing emissions means independence and security.** Instead of depending on imported fossil fuels, countries can harness the wind, water, sun, and geothermal heat, which are plentiful and available, to varying extents, in all countries – allowing for energy security¹⁰ and independence¹¹ from foreign sources and geopolitical volatilities. A minimum of 25 million people are expected to migrate by 2050 as a result of climate change. Other estimates say hundreds of millions. Acting to lower emissions and build resilience will create better conditions for peace and reduce forced migration, easing pressures on borders and budgets.
- **Climate action saves lives and increases human health.** Acting on climate now could help avert an estimated 14.5 million deaths and USD12.5 trillion in economic losses predicted by 2050¹². Extreme weather events turbo-charged by climate change caused over two million deaths¹³ and USD4.3 trillion in economic losses over the past 50 years.

³ NGFS publishes latest long-term climate macro-financial scenarios for climate risks assessment | Network for Greening the Financial System

⁴ International Renewable Energy Agency (IRENA), *Renewable power generation costs in 2023*, International Renewable Energy Agency, Abu Dhabi, 2024.

⁵ See <https://www.iea.org/reports/world-energy-employment-2023>

⁶ IRENA, *The post-COVID recovery: an agenda for resilience, development and equality*, International Renewable Energy Agency, Abu Dhabi, 2020.

⁷ International Labour Organization, United Nations Environment Programme and the International Union for Conservation of Nature, *Decent work in nature-based solutions: Unlocking jobs through investment in skills and nature-based infrastructure*. Geneva, 2024.

⁸ Global Commission on Adaptation, *Adapt Now: A Global Call for Leadership on Climate Resilience*, 2019.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ See <https://www.iea.org/reports/renewables-2022>.

¹¹ WETO Digital Report

¹² Quantifying the Impact of Climate Change on Human Health
[WEF_Quantifying_the_Impact_of_Climate_Change_on_Human_Health_2024.pdf](#)

¹³ World Meteorological Organization, 2023: Atlas of Mortality and Economic Losses from Weather, Climate and Water-related Hazards (1970-2021)

- **Climate action boost food security, farmer incomes and livelihoods and protects nature and biodiversity. Sustainably managing and restoring ecosystems is a major solution to the climate crisis.** According to the Emissions Gap Report 2024¹⁴, action on forests alone could deliver around 20 per cent of the cuts needed by 2030 and 2035 to meet the Paris Agreement goals.

1.5°C-aligned transitions must be fast and fair.

- To keep the worst of climate chaos at bay, we must supercharge the roll-out of renewable energy and the phase out of fossil fuels, halt and reverse deforestation, and ensure 1.5°C-aligned transitions across critical sectors. And we must ensure that these transitions are just for people and planet.
- To take forward the key outcomes on energy transition from COP28 — tripling renewable energy capacity and doubling energy efficiency improvements by 2030 while accelerating the transition away from fossil fuels — it is important to build coalitions for just and equitable transitions across sectors, including facilitating dialogue and cooperation on issues such as Just Energy Transition Partnerships (JETPs) and other similar country-led and multi-stakeholder approaches on fossil fuel phase-out, technological innovation, critical minerals, grid modernization and battery storage, methane emission reductions, agriculture and land-based mitigation measures, and industrial decarbonization.
- Efforts need to be directed towards implementation of the Actionable Recommendations launched by the Secretary-General's Panel on Critical Energy Transition Minerals to properly manage mineral value chains with human rights and environmental integrity at their core, working towards equity and justice and accelerate greater benefit-sharing, value addition and economic diversification.
- Countries need to urgently identify the technologies necessary for their transitions, and we need a mechanism to fast-track the transfer of these technologies on mutually agreed terms.
- The ongoing growth in **renewable energy** should both add new energy capacity to ensure affordable universal energy access and **replace existing fossil fuel-based capacity**.
- Governments must reallocate, reform, and phase out fossil fuel subsidies to advance a just energy transition. It is high time to put an effective price on carbon, that is aligned with the Paris Agreement's goals, and tax the windfall profits of fossil fuel companies.
- Trade-related climate measures, including those aimed at sustainable consumption and reducing deforestation, should be aligned with **international trade rules** and minimize trade market access barriers and compliance costs in trade partners, particularly for SMEs in developing countries.
- Accelerating the deployment of carbon dioxide removal and storage measures can also contribute to global efforts, especially to address final emissions from hard-to-abate sectors. However, they cannot be a substitute for drastic emissions cuts or an excuse to delay fossil fuel phase-out. Acknowledging the contribution of other low-carbon technologies, such as nuclear technologies.
- **The 1.5°C-aligned transitions must be gender-responsive and just for all**, in accordance with human rights, gender equality, children's rights, labour rights, and

¹⁴ United Nations Environment Programme Emissions Gap Report 2024: No more hot air ... please! With a massive gap between rhetoric and reality, countries draft new climate commitments. Nairobi, 2024. <https://doi.org/10.59117/20.500.11822/46404>

national development priorities, including through the creation of decent work and quality jobs, social dialogue, education and skills development, and adaptive social protection.

- **A just, orderly, and equitable transition away from fossil fuels** must recognize and account for countries' common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities (CBDR-RC), accounting for and ameliorating the negative impacts across population groups with a focus on the most vulnerable. **Advanced G20 economies should go furthest, fastest.**

The climate finance architecture must be reformed to deliver the trillions needed to secure a liveable planet for all.

- Climate finance is not a favour. It is an investment in global stability and a liveable future for all.
- The new finance goal agreed at COP29 calls on developed countries to take the lead in mobilizing at least \$300 billion per year for developing countries by 2035 to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and protect lives and livelihoods from the worsening impacts of climate change. Parties also agreed to scale up climate finance for developing countries from all public and private sources to \$1.3 trillion a year by 2035.
- It is therefore crucial to **continue to make serious efforts to reform the financial architecture** – both international and domestic – to ensure emerging and developing countries can equitably access the finance and technology needed to support their climate and development efforts.
- The 4th Financing for Development conference taking place in June-July this year provides an opportunity to propose meaningful actions on fundamental issues to mobilize finance for climate and development at scale.
- Ongoing efforts to establish a **UN framework convention on international tax cooperation** should be supported in view of facilitating domestic resource mobilization.
- In a context marked by high levels of indebtedness, elevated interest rates, reduced fiscal space, and geopolitical uncertainty, the **multiplication of investment sources** and types, including in the form of grants and concessional financing, will be essential.
- The **cost of capital is a key barrier** to renewable energy and other key sectoral investments in developing countries. Partnerships between international investors, the public sector, and multilateral financial institutions can greatly reduce the cost of capital. Availability of finance at **concessional rates and for longer term** would be critical in this regard.
- Reforming Multilateral Development Banks (MDBs) and easing access to finance can create an **enabling international environment** for higher ambition through increasing public finance and leveraging private finance for net-zero and climate-resilient transitions. These reforms should focus on **increasing the capital of the MDBs and reforming their business models to scale up direct support and leverage more private finance at reasonable costs** for climate action in developing countries.
- We need to move from exploring to implementing **innovative sources of finance**, including solidarity levies and **GHG pricing mechanisms** to help fund climate action. These should be **scalable, fair, and easy to collect and administer.**

- We also need **better spending and sound policies** that can attract private investment and send clear signals about the direction of travel, informed by good analysis – an area where the UN system can work together with MDBs and other key partners.
- **Carbon markets** that abide by the highest standards of credibility and integrity, including effective human rights safeguards, can play a role in emission reduction efforts, mobilize climate finance from public and private sources, and assist in channelling climate finance from developed to developing countries.

Adaptation must be planned, financed and implemented at a scale that matches the worsening climate crisis.

- **Adaptation** to climate change safeguards people from higher temperatures, rising seas, fiercer storms, unpredictable rainfall, wildfires, and other climate impacts. When planned and implemented right, with risk-informed approaches and backed up by adequate funding, **adaptation saves lives and livelihoods**.
- **Building resilience** across sectors is critically urgent to protect societies and economies, and to reduce the adverse effects of climate change on people's health, ability to grow food, housing, safety, and work, among others.
- **National adaptation plans** (NAPs) should be designed to attract finance from a broad range of donors and investors – public and private, including philanthropic sources.
- Current **adaptation finance** gaps are estimated at US\$203--388 billion per year. Delivering on the commitment of the developed countries to at least double adaptation finance from 2019 levels by 2025 and ensuring that at least half of all climate finance goes to adaptation and resilience-building efforts across sectors is critical.
- Implementation of the **Secretary-General's Early Warnings for All and Adaptation Pipeline Accelerator initiatives** and other similar country-led approaches to adaptation planning and implementation are essential for delivering climate justice while averting, minimizing, and addressing losses and damages.
- When taking adaptation action, governments should ensure **country-driven, gender-responsive, participatory and human rights-based approaches**, as well as intergenerational equity and social justice, taking into consideration vulnerable ecosystems, groups and communities, and including children, youth and persons with disabilities.

The Fund for Responding to Loss and Damage must be sufficiently resourced and fully operationalized.

- Global warming has already caused dangerous and widespread losses and damages that will further increase with every increment of global warming.
- We must build on the momentum from COP28 and COP29 to ensure the **rapid operationalization of the Fund for responding to loss and damage** and secure further contributions from a variety of sources to ensure financial assistance is provided to the most vulnerable nations.
- The **Santiago network** must be strengthened and scaled up to provide much needed technical assistance to developing countries to avert, minimize and address loss and damage, including by enabling access to complementing programmatic approaches of the Fund.
- Losses and damages are “unequally distributed across systems, regions and sectors” and are “strongly concentrated among the poorest vulnerable populations”¹⁵. Their

¹⁵ See https://www.ipcc.ch/report/ar6/wg2/downloads/report/IPCC_AR6_WGII_SummaryForPolicymakers.pdf.

access to the Fund should be prioritized as a matter of international solidarity and climate justice.

- To ensure the Fund for Responding to Loss and Damage is effective and fully operationalized, we must build on lessons learned from other climate funds to fast-track access and simplify procedures.

Non-State actors' commitments and actions must be aligned with limiting global warming to 1.5°C.

- A growing number of non-State actors – in **the private and financial sectors, local governments, and regions** – have committed to reducing their emissions to net zero.
- Net-zero commitments must include interim targets, cover all scopes of emissions, have transparent verification processes and must not use carbon offsets to achieve emissions reduction targets.
- Strengthening the credibility and accountability of non-State actors' net-zero commitments and ensure standardized and transparent reporting – through the implementation of the recommendations of the High-Level Expert Group on the Net-Zero Emissions Commitments of Non-State Entities and the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights – is critical to limit greenwashing and bogus net-zero claims.
- Monitoring should be tightened on fossil-fuel production and hard-to-abate sectors, such as steel, cement, or aviation, as well as on private and public financial support for such emission-intensive sectors.
- By implementing credible 1.5°C-aligned climate action, non-State actors **can be key delivery partners** and support countries in achieving their ambition on sectoral commitments and NDCs by demonstrating transition plans, and ensuring they contribute to increased ambition of national goals. Non-State actors can work with Governments in developing **regulatory frameworks that support the transition from voluntary 1.5°C-aligned commitments to mandatory requirements**.
- We need an all-hands-on-deck approach to keep 1.5°C within reach: this means **all financial institutions must end their fossil fuel lending**, underwriting and investments and shift to renewables instead, and fossil fuel companies must chart their move towards clean energy, with detailed 1.5°C-aligned transition plans, as well as accountability and transparency mechanisms, across the entire value chain in this critical decade.

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