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Advancing sustainable, inclusive, science- and evidence-based solutions for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its Sustainable Development Goals for leaving no one behind

Discussion papers on the theme of the high-level political forum on sustainable development, submitted by major groups and other stakeholders**

Note by the Secretariat

The present document is a compilation of the executive summaries of the position papers on the theme of the 2025 high-level political forum on sustainable development, “Advancing sustainable, inclusive, science- and evidence-based solutions for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its Sustainable Development Goals for leaving no one behind”, submitted by the various major groups and other relevant stakeholders that have autonomously established and maintained effective coordination mechanisms for participation in the high-level political forum, in accordance with General Assembly resolution 67/290. The full reports are posted on the website of the forum: hlpf.un.org/2025.

* [E/HLPF/2025/1](https://hlpf.un.org/2025/1).

** The present document is a compilation of the executive summaries of the thematic papers submitted to the high-level political forum on sustainable development by the major groups and other stakeholders and does not necessarily reflect the views of the United Nations.



I. Women

“The most common way people give up their power is by thinking they don’t have any.” – Alice Walker

1. This is a moment to fiercely defend the right to shape lived realities. With only five years left, the international community stands at the brink of an abyss, witnessing and experiencing a global increase in anti-rights pushback, shrinking aid budgets, the erosion of multilateral commitments, flagrant violations of international law with impunity and intensified systemic crises. Rights, lives, bodies, the planet and the vision of the world that the international community has fought to see realized are under unprecedented attack, disproportionately harming women, girls, gender-diverse people and marginalized communities.

2. The women’s major group asserts a bold feminist vision for 2030 – rejecting patriarchy, racism, colonialism, capitalism and militarism as foundational problems, embracing instead solidarity, justice, care, ecological regeneration and collective liberation.

3. The women’s major group denounces global militarization and excessive military spending at the expense of progress towards the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Resources must urgently shift from war-making to critical societal infrastructure, including gender-responsive public health systems that integrate comprehensive sexual and reproductive health services, comprehensive sexuality education and access to safe abortion, centring bodily autonomy and human rights, aligned with Goal 3.

4. In an increasingly hostile global landscape, the women’s major group refuses to cede ground on Goal 5. Gender equality is not a secondary consideration but a prerequisite for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. Feminist organizing, human rights defenders and grass-roots movements are the pillars for the radical transformation. The women’s major group envisions and requires full recognition and unwavering support. Governments must actively resist anti-gender forces and unequivocally protect feminist and LGBTQI+ movements through substantial, flexible and long-term funding and robust protective mechanisms.

5. To achieve Goal 8, commitment to economic justice must replace neoliberal and patriarchal systems that exploit labour, extract resources and exacerbate inequalities. Feminist, decolonial economic models that prioritize care economies, universal social protections, fair wages and dignity, and labour rights and that centre care as a human right are essential for sustainable societies.

6. Achieving oceanic and environmental justice envisioned by Goal 14 requires dismantling oppressive systems responsible for ecological collapse. The women’s major group demands reparative gender-responsive climate finance from the global North, recognition of Indigenous sovereignty and rejection of false and harmful solutions. Genuine feminist environmentalism places grass-roots and Indigenous knowledge and leadership at its core to sustainably protect and regenerate marine ecosystems.

7. Realizing Goal 17 requires radical reform of multilateralism to ensure equitable global partnerships rooted in solidarity, feminist principles and democratic accountability. The women’s major group challenges exclusionary governance, corporate capture and coercive tactics that suppress independent civil society engagement. Transformative feminist leadership and meaningful participation by historically silenced voices must be central to revitalizing multilateral spaces.

8. The women's major group calls upon governments and global institutions to rise with political courage, protect and expand feminist visions, uphold human rights and decisively implement the 2030 Agenda. Its shared future hinges on your courage. Specifically, governments and global institutions should:

(a) Implement an immediate and permanent ceasefire to the ongoing global conflicts;

(b) Address inequalities caused by discrimination; illicit financial flows and unfair trade agreements, various forms of censorship, political and corporate capture, stigmatization and marginalization;

(c) Affirm the right to development, recognizing the universality, indivisibility, interrelatedness and interdependence of all human rights;

(d) Recognize universal social protection as a precondition for social development, adopting social protection policies that lift people out of poverty;

(e) Advance policy and normative frameworks to uphold and protect the human rights and fundamental freedoms of all young people, including young LGBTQIA+ people and people with diverse sexual orientations and gender identities;

(f) Reform the international financial architecture, including repudiation of illegitimate debts and establishing funding mechanisms that directly support community and grass-roots organizations and ensuring youth representation on multilateral development bank boards;

(g) Integrate human mobility into national adaptation and climate change response plans and invest in preparedness and loss and damages provisions;

(h) Establish pathways to provide children and young people on the move with access to high-quality education, as well as mechanisms to guarantee sustainable livelihoods;

(i) Promote gender-responsive disaster risk reduction strategies to build resilient communities. This should include early warning systems and disaster risk reduction recovery measures that prioritize inclusivity and address the specific needs of women and marginalized groups;

(j) Recognize care as a vital sector of the economy, expanding care infrastructure and adopting gender-responsive care policies to advance the social, economic and political empowerment of women and girls;

(k) Implement bold, youth-centred employment policies that bridge the education to work gap by integrating technical training, digital skills and apprenticeships into formal education. Take action to address barriers faced by displaced youth and young women through legal work protections, equal pay and inclusive training programmes;

(l) Integrate comprehensive, age-appropriate sustainable energy education into formal and non-formal education systems to empower young people to drive the shift towards just and sustainable energy transitions;

(m) Reaffirm the synergies between the Rio conventions to tackle the triple planetary crisis and address crucial issues that threaten the well-being of people and the planet, including by upholding equitable land rights;

(n) Develop and mobilize a coordinated strategy on children's environmental health across the United Nations system, including by convening a multi-stakeholder United Nations forum on children's environmental health and launching an international decade of action;

(o) Mainstream sustainable consumption and production policies at all levels – from the global to the national level – to decouple economic growth from environmental degradation. This must include empowering young people to lead healthy and sustainable lifestyles;

(p) Protect the rights of marginalized youth, including youth from communities that experience discrimination based on work and descent, and ensure their inclusion in education, decent work and economic growth;

(q) Strengthen and uphold rights-based participation modalities that provide protected spaces for critical segments of society, building on the modalities described in General Assembly resolution [67/290](#).

II. Non-governmental organizations

9. Implementing the 2030 Agenda requires shared responsibility, international cooperation and collective action. However, increasing nationalism, geopolitical tensions and weakened multilateralism have weakened the spirit of collaboration and international law, hindering efforts to address urgent challenges – poverty, inequality, conflict and the triple planetary crises. Incremental progress no longer suffices; bold and inclusive action is now needed to protect nature and ensure that no one is left behind, even with funding constrained. All governments and stakeholders must act in a spirit of global citizenship to ensure that no one is left behind.

10. In these final five years of the 2030 Agenda, the non-governmental organizations major group urges Member States and stakeholders to intensify efforts and accelerate progress towards the Goals. In partnership, the non-governmental organizations major group presents the following recommendations for each Goal under review at the 2025 high-level political forum on sustainable development:

(a) Goal 3: Adopt an environmentally and socially just One Health approach that recognizes the interdependence of human, animal, plant and planetary well-being. Prioritize primary prevention, promote maternal and child health, ensure nurturing environments, promote healthy, plant-forward diets, invest in animal health systems and provide comprehensive healthcare for all, including marginalized groups;

(b) Goal 5: Women and girls still face discrimination, violence and limited access to education, healthcare and economic opportunities. Addressing these issues requires sustained policy reform, increased funding and gender-focused initiatives that account for intersectionality and the needs of marginalized groups;

(c) Goal 8: Economic inequalities persist. Member States, including businesses and non-business entities, must ensure that all workers, particularly those in informal sectors, have access to fair wages, social protection and safe working conditions, thereby fostering inclusive and sustainable economic growth;

(d) Goal 14: Strengthen international cooperation and enforcement to conserve and ensure sustainable and resilient marine environments and protect animal and plant life under water. Close research gaps, share data, address by-catch, support animal health and welfare standards in aquaculture and fisheries, and expand marine protected areas to 30 per cent by 2030;

(e) Goal 17: Revitalized partnerships are essential to accelerate the 2030 Agenda and the Goals, ensuring a unified and multidimensional global effort and development for all, in line with common but differentiated responsibilities.

11. The non-governmental organizations major group urges Member States to use the 2025 high-level political forum on sustainable development to reaffirm their

commitment to the 2030 Agenda, keeping the Goals central to cooperation, policy and financing. Failure to fulfil these commitments will have profound, far-reaching and interconnected consequences, affecting generations to come. Furthermore, insufficient support for civil society weakens services, stifles innovation and jeopardizes the 2030 Agenda. Therefore, the non-governmental organizations major group calls upon Member States to:

- (a) Ensure full and meaningful inclusion of civil society;
- (b) Deliver on concrete commitments to fully finance the Goals;
- (c) Reaffirm and strengthen multilateralism;
- (d) Commit to meaningful and equitable reform of multilateral institutions;
- (e) Address structural and systemic inequalities.

III. Local authorities

12. Local and regional governments are essential for equitable access to public services and sustainable development. Their proximity to communities promotes transformative policies, ensuring universal access to services while addressing socioeconomic and environmental challenges. Their role extends beyond administration, shaping policies that foster well-being, prosperity, sustainability and meaningful engagement of youth and marginalized groups.

13. Inclusive governance and multi-level collaboration are key to accelerating progress. Local and regional governments are forging partnerships that strengthen public services, rebuild trust and foster democratic participation. Progress on the Goals requires localized and integrated approaches, building on the United Cities and Local Governments local Sustainable Development Goals rescue plan and rooted in inclusive policy frameworks that engage young people as active stakeholders.

14. Reducing inequalities requires policies centred on care to strengthen the social contract. Leading up to the World Social Summit for Social Development, local and regional governments are crucial in advancing the Copenhagen Declaration on Social Development and the 2030 Agenda, fostering equal rights and inclusive economic development and leaving no one behind. Their leadership is key to addressing disparities and securing opportunities for younger generations and intergenerational justice.

15. Health, well-being and sustainability are interconnected. Equitable access to services, safe environments, and resilient urban and territorial planning promote long-term development. Knowledge-sharing and evidence-based policies are essential for tackling global challenges and build resilient and inclusive communities.

16. Gender equality is fundamental to fostering inclusive communities. In the year of the 30-year review of the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, local and regional governments and the Feminist Municipal Movement champion women's leadership, political participation and economic empowerment, tackling systemic inequalities and fostering balanced societies. Ensuring the participation of young women and girls in decision-making is key to strengthening democracy, peace and justice.

17. A just transition requires strong local leadership. Local and regional governments are central in promoting decent work, inclusive labour policies and economic models that prioritize social protections. Strengthening governance, social dialogue and local economic policies can address inequalities and promote fair

employment. Investing in youth employment, inclusive labour strategies and skills development is crucial for a forward-looking workforce.

18. Local and regional governments are key actors in ocean action, driving sustainable solutions. Strengthening multi-level governance, cross-sector collaboration, and science and finance ensure equitable action on marine protection, biodiversity and climate adaptation while developing sustainable aquatic economies.

19. Governing in partnership is key to accelerating progress on the 2030 Agenda in its final stretch. As the Pact for the Future highlights the role of local and regional governments as partners in accelerating the Goals, their acknowledgement as political actors is essential, including by strengthening local and regional government engagement in intergovernmental processes. An inclusive and networked multilateralism fostering decentralized cooperation is paramount for regaining trust, building resilience and articulating a joint vision for the future.

20. Strengthening governance mechanisms reinforces the integration of voluntary local reviews and voluntary subnational reviews into voluntary national reviews. Investing in scientific collaboration, financial innovation and trust-building enhances local efforts in addressing environmental and social challenges. Integrating voluntary local reviews and voluntary subnational reviews into national planning ensures that such efforts contribute to global progress.

IV. Workers and trade unions

21. Preparations for the 2025 high-level political forum on sustainable development are being made amid multiple crises, which not only widen the financing gap for sustainable development and erode democracy worldwide but also threaten the very essence of a multilateralism based on human rights and solidarity.

22. The global trade union movement urges States Members of the United Nations to seize the opportunity presented by the high-level political forum on sustainable development to support workers' call for a new social contract¹ and its six key demands: (a) the creation of decent and climate-friendly jobs with just transitions; (b) rights for all workers; (c) minimum living wages and equal pay; (d) universal social protection; (e) equality; and (f) inclusion.

23. Demands relating to the Goals under review at the 2025 high-level political forum on sustainable development are as follows:

(a) **Goal 3:**

- (i) Ensure universal access to high-quality public healthcare;
- (ii) Increase public investment in creating decent jobs in the health and care sector;
- (iii) Adhere to International Labour Organization (ILO) Conventions Nos. 155 and 187, which enshrine decent, healthy and safe workplaces as fundamental rights;
- (iv) Increase public investment in health research and promote public control over essential medicines and treatments;
- (v) Recognize unpaid care work as a human right and public good that is essential to economic and social well-being.

¹ International Trade Union Confederation, Fifth World Congress, final statement, November 2022. Available at www.ituc-csi.org/IMG/pdf/5co-final-statement-en.pdf.

(b) Goal 5:

- (i) Promote gender equality as an essential component of social justice, democracy and peace;
- (ii) Uphold ILO fundamental principles and rights at work for all women;
- (iii) Establish universal and gender-transformative social protection systems;
- (iv) Promote decent work for women, especially by investing in comprehensive care systems;
- (v) Implement policies that ensure equal pay for work of equal value;
- (vi) Ratify and effectively implement ILO Convention No. 190 to eradicate gender-based violence and harassment.

(c) Goal 8:

- (i) Invest in creating decent and climate-friendly jobs through social dialogue;
- (ii) Formalize at least 1 billion informal workers by 2030;
- (iii) Establish statutory minimum living wages, along with social dialogue and collective bargaining;
- (iv) Invest in reskilling and upskilling programmes to prepare workers for a just digital and climate transition;
- (v) End all forms of exploitation and abuse in the workplace;
- (vi) Support the ILO tripartite standard-setting process to protect the rights of workers in the platform economy.

(d) Goal 14:

- (i) Invest in climate-friendly jobs with fair wages, social protection and formalization in tourism, fisheries and related sectors;
- (ii) Strengthen social dialogue and promote a just transition in fisheries.

(e) Goal 17:

- (i) Reinforce the role of social dialogue as a means to boost implementation of the Goals;
- (ii) Support a structural reform of the international financial architecture at the Fourth International Conference on Financing for Development,
- (iii) Invest in high-quality data on which to base efficient policy decisions.

V. Business and industry

24. In the next five years, the business and industry major group, comprising large corporations, business organizations, employers' groups, small and medium-sized enterprises, and micro-, small and medium-sized enterprises in over 150 countries, will meet new challenges and adjust to emerging issues, political and technological change, and social and environmental stresses.

25. The business and industry major group continues to provide solutions towards sustainable development, inclusive economic growth and multilateral cooperation for the 2030 Agenda and the Goals and is ready to do its part to deliver the Pact for the Future.

26. The involvement of the business and industry major group is critical for framing, improving and implementing international decisions and policies and assessing effectiveness and impact. Business tools, management approaches, expertise and scaling are more important than ever for the United Nations and in partnering with governments and local communities.

27. While all the Goals are important, the business and industry major group encourages attention to force multiplier Goals, such as Goal 8 (economic growth and decent work), that catalyse development, circular benefits, innovation and investment.

28. It is imperative to urgently establish or expand regulatory and policy environments to foster economic stability, encourage investment and facilitate innovation. Clear, predictable and scientifically grounded regulations and trade rules reduce uncertainty and enable business.

29. Public-private collaboration is essential here – Governments must work closely with businesses to develop critical infrastructure and streamline regulations. In this regard, a renewed focus on public-private partnerships through and with the United Nations is vital. More attention is needed for public-private partnerships in forums such as the Fourth International Conference on Financing for Development, the thirtieth session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and the Second World Summit for Social Development.

30. Business and industry major group main messages for the 2025 high-level political forum on sustainable development to reinvigorate action towards the 2030 Agenda include:

- (a) Enable sound regulation and implementation;
 - (i) Stable economic and regulatory policies: prioritize clear, predictable and science-based laws and rules-based trade rules;
 - (ii) Public-private collaboration: partner with businesses to develop infrastructure and enable innovation and its deployment;
 - (iii) Finance and investment: low-interest loans, impact investments and government incentives will expand sustainable operations;
- (b) People-centred infrastructure: “soft” elements are key, including education, health, digital and capacity-building;
 - (i) Inclusive education and training: the Goals depend on strong education systems, apprenticeships and upskilling programmes, including for women and girls;
 - (ii) Digital and technological readiness: invest in digital skills, artificial intelligence, and access to energy and the Internet;
- (c) Sustainable and inclusive growth for shared prosperity;
 - (i) Support for small and medium-sized enterprises and start-ups: simplify business registration, access to markets and financial support for small and medium-sized enterprises;
 - (ii) Diversity and inclusion: boost economic participation of women, youth and marginalized groups;
- (d) Innovation and future-ready approaches;
 - (i) Digital transformation: public and private sectors should invest in artificial intelligence and other new and promising technologies for sustainable development;

- (ii) Resilient business models: adapt to climate change, economic shifts and future work trends for long-term stability.

31. The United Nations should strengthen connections with the business and industry major group. Leading up to 2030, business is essential to resource mobilization, innovative technology deployment and the building of trust through transparency and impact.

VI. Volunteer groups

A. Advancing through volunteering sustainable, inclusive, science- and evidence-based solutions for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its Sustainable Development Goals for leaving no one behind

32. As sustainable development suffers significant setbacks as a result of armed conflict, inequality and climate change, the more than 1 billion volunteers around the globe continue to contribute significantly to the only way forward to save the planet: accelerating the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the fulfilment of each of the Goals.

33. Volunteer groups call upon Members States to strategically and regularly engage with volunteers by:

- (a) Gathering and amplifying citizen and volunteer voices in key moments and spaces for them to participate and fully engage in critical decision-making mechanisms and processes;
- (b) Supporting volunteer-State partnerships and volunteer service expenditures in government budgets;
- (c) Facilitating the permanent exchange of best practices, lessons learned and joint efforts with volunteers across the world.

B. Recommendations

1. National strategies

- (a) Advocate and integrate volunteering into policies and national development strategies and in voluntary national reviews to create a more enabling environment for volunteering;
- (b) Explore national and global partnerships and collaborations to leverage efforts towards supporting and promoting volunteering;
- (c) Build coalitions and networks for learning and shared action on developing and enabling an environment for volunteering;
- (d) Adopt the Global Volunteering Standard, which, combined with supportive public policies, strengthens the quality of volunteering.

2. Inclusive diversity

- (a) Build on experiences of promoting volunteering among youth and extend opportunities to all demographic groups, especially through virtual and hybrid opportunities;

- (b) Recognize, work with and support community-led volunteering systems and informal volunteers, involving them as equal partners in the volunteering space;
- (c) Address barriers to volunteering faced by marginalized groups, ensuring that all volunteers are valued and supported as partners in social change;
- (d) Address gender-related volunteering disparities and inequalities, recognizing that the disproportionate burden of care globally falls on women;
- (e) Promote and support regional volunteer resource centres to provide diversified participation and advocacy support.

3. Measuring success

- (a) Invest in technology, data and research on the scope of volunteer work for the Goals by accelerating measurement of the scale of volunteering;
- (b) Increase support for the collection of evidence and statistics on volunteer work and the economic and social contributions of volunteers during their projects, as well as afterwards, in relation to long-term impact;
- (c) Support a wider range of evidence-based, high-quality volunteering practices, knowledge-sharing and scaling up as ways to address barriers to volunteering for marginalized groups;
- (d) Accept citizen-generated data to inform Goals-related review processes and national plans.

34. Leaving no one behind stipulates that people, including volunteers, should be prioritized in international and national decision-making. Volunteer groups encourage those in power, along with all stakeholders, to prioritize the well-being of all people above personal interests and egos. Only then can a more peaceful and just world be built for everyone.

VII. Scientific and technological communities major group

35. The future of global scientific collaboration is at risk, jeopardizing progress on the Goals. Geopolitical tensions, the securitization of research and growing restrictions on scientific freedom are undermining international cooperation at a time when collective action is essential. To safeguard science and engineering as global public goods, governments and funders must strengthen science, technology and innovation ecosystems and protect the right to participate in and benefit from science.²

36. Amid these growing challenges, science and engineering must be leveraged as tools for peace and cooperation. One pressing example is ocean governance, where environmental degradation and resource competition intersect. A shared stewardship approach integrating resilience strategies can turn potential conflicts into sustainable cooperation. Science and engineering must play a central role in peacebuilding efforts, from technology governance to environmental management.

37. Emerging technologies, including digital technology and biotechnology, can accelerate sustainability when governed responsibly. In particular, artificial intelligence is reshaping science systems³ and decision-making, with the capacity to advance all 17 Goals. However, its use must be guided by policies that uphold ethical principles, transparency and human rights to avoid exacerbating inequalities and

² See <https://council.science/our-work/right-to-science/>.

³ See <https://council.science/publications/ai-science-systems/>.

undermining scientific integrity. The United Nations must play a leading role in shaping global governance to ensure that these technologies serve the common good.

38. Insufficient financial and policy commitments are restraining progress despite scientific breakthroughs. Science, engineering, technology and innovation remain critical drivers of progress on the Goals, with breakthroughs in areas such as public health or climate resilience providing solutions for Goals 3, 5, 8, 14 and 17. Over the past decade, the multi-stakeholder forum on science, technology and innovation for the Sustainable Development Goals has showcased successful examples of scientific cooperation driving sustainable development. However, mechanisms for scaling these efforts, such as the Technology Facilitation Mechanism, remain underfunded.

39. A mission-driven, transdisciplinary approach to science and engineering is essential to accelerate sustainability. The Science Missions for Sustainability pilot projects of the International Science Council⁴ show how co-designed, solution-driven science can deliver real-world impact across climate, biodiversity and social equity. However, achieving this requires moving research funding from short-term models to problem-oriented investments in line with global sustainability priorities.

40. Diverse leadership strengthens the credibility and impact of science-informed solutions. The persistent underrepresentation of women and other marginalized groups in scientific organizations and forums, including with regard to equitable representation, participation and leadership,⁵ weakens the global science system, limiting research and innovation.

41. Trust in science is crucial for ensuring the effective use of scientific knowledge in policy. However, it is increasingly challenged by political polarization, misinformation and disinformation. When trust is compromised, the capacity for coordinated global action diminishes. As a universal language for cooperation, science that is grounded in evidence, observation and peer review must be communicated transparently. Continuously strengthening science-policy interfaces⁶ can ensure that science remains a trusted tool for policy.

VIII. Ageing

42. For the theme of the 2025 high-level political forum on sustainable development to be meaningful, no older person can be left behind. It is time to harness the resources, contributions and talents of older persons while assuring their rights and basic needs.

43. **Goal 3:** Prevention and treatment of noncommunicable diseases at all ages is necessary to ensure healthy longevity, together with post-menopausal care, for older women. Poor health conditions for older women living and working in rural/marginalized communities are linked to inadequate cooking equipment, farming and carrying water. Vaccines at all ages are vital for sustained health. Strategies linking other Goals (Goals 1, 5, 6 and 8) improve the likelihood of success.

44. **Goal 5:** Nearly 27 per cent of women today are more than 50 years of age. Cumulative effects of gender-based discrimination over the life course can lead to the poverty, ill health, disability, violence and exclusion of older women. Most older women do not have health insurance and pensions due to lower and interrupted labour-force participation, unpaid caregiving, part-time, precarious and informal work, and the gender pay gap. Policies that meaningfully affect older women include

⁴ See <https://council.science/?s=Science+Missions+for+Sustainability>.

⁵ See <https://council.science/our-work/gender-equality/>.

⁶ See <https://council.science/publications/reframing-trust-in-science/>.

the strengthening of age- and gender-inclusive data collection and reporting mechanisms, together with programmes based on the principles of equal value and equal rights. Barriers to the rights of older women to decent work, social protection, health, education and housing must be removed. Violence against older women must be recognized and stopped. Older women, including those with disabilities, must publicly lead and promote age- and gender-equitable and universally accessible humanitarian and gender-sensitive climate change policies, plans and programmes.

45. **Goal 8:** The number of older adults in the informal and formal labour force has increased continuously. Those aged 65 years and over will make up nearly 17 per cent of the global population by 2050. They must now be integrated into national and international labour and social protection strategies, according to decent work principles, with their vital economic contributions recognized. Strategies ensuring economic independence in older age, underpinned by income and pension systems to reinforce the agency and contributions of older persons, reduce their poverty risk. Older workers must receive fair wages, adequate social protection, and safe and adaptable working conditions.

46. **Goal 17:** Partnerships mobilizing financing, as well as the collection and best use of disaggregated age-inclusive data, underpins the promise of “societies for all of all ages”. Intergovernmental collaboration, such as the Titchfield Group on Ageing-Related Statistics and Age-Disaggregated Data, spotlights best practices towards success. Implementation of social protection floors in all countries, with technical and financial national and global partnerships to deliver health services and income in old age, is essential, as is investment in age-friendly infrastructure supporting ageing populations in all countries.

IX. Education and academia

47. Education is a universal and indivisible human right that must be ensured with regard to young children, children, youth, adults and older persons. Amid geopolitical conflicts, climate crises, poverty and increasing inequalities, the right to education is key to empowering people to confront multiple crises and achieve the Goals. Leading up to the 2025 high-level political forum on sustainable development, the education and academia stakeholder group urges Governments to deliver on Goal 4⁷ and integrate education into the Goals under in-depth review at the forum.

48. **Goal 3: Good health and well-being.** Education enables knowledge, skills and decision-making to promote healthy lives, including physical, mental and socioemotional well-being. Member States should ensure that holistic health education includes nutrition, mental health, prevention of noncommunicable diseases and health-related rights. Countries must also provide comprehensive sexual and reproductive health education that promotes well-being and healthy relationships.

49. **Goal 5: Gender equality.** Gender-transformative education, from early childhood to adulthood, is a key driver of gender equality and a feminist tool to challenge patriarchal norms and transform the economic and social status of girls and women and members of LGBTIQ+ communities. Governments must finance and implement gender-transformative education and community-based awareness efforts that extend beyond schooling and reach families, local networks and wider society.

50. **Goal 8: Decent work and economic growth.** The seventh International Conference on Adult Education⁸ and the Marrakech Framework for Action include a

⁷ See www.globalgoals.org/goals/4-quality-education/.

⁸ See www.uil.unesco.org/en/seventh-international-conference-adult-education.

call for comprehensive, evidence-based, gender-transformative, cross-sectoral and inclusive literacy policies and implementation strategies, for which new education methods must be explored. Education and lifelong learning should not serve growth at any cost but contribute to economic models that respect human dignity, social justice and the environment. Education must foster a culture of lifelong learning that enables decent work, adaptability and personal growth, especially for marginalized groups.

51. **Goal 14: Life below water.** Education plays a critical role in building awareness and responsibility for protecting marine ecosystems. To contribute to ocean sustainability, education must move beyond industrial, market-driven models and adopt approaches that foster environmental literacy, critical thinking and civic engagement. Climate change education and ocean literacy should empower learners to understand the human impact on oceans, reflect on their ecological footprint and take action to prevent pollution and preserve marine biodiversity.

52. **Goal 17: Partnerships.** Achieving Goal 4 requires inclusive, democratic and sustained partnerships at all levels. Governments must engage with civil society organizations, learners, students and academia as equal partners, not only in implementation but also in needs assessment, planning, monitoring and evaluation of education policies and strategies. Partnerships must be gender-responsive and grounded in mutual accountability, shared knowledge and respect for local and global expertise. Governments must progressively increase financing for equitable, quality, resilient and gender-transformative public education systems. This includes domestic resource mobilization, progressive taxation, official development assistance for education and negotiating debt cancellation.

X. Asia-Pacific Regional Civil Society Engagement Mechanism

53. At the outset of the Asia-Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development, held in February 2025, the prospects for sustainable development remained in tatters. No goals were on track, and many targets, particularly in relation to the climate crisis, decent work, inequalities, peace, gender equality, governance and partnerships, had regressed. The only targets that were on track were those focused on increased profitability for multinational corporations and industry in Goal 9. The barrier to making progress on the Goals is not a lack of knowledge, data or available finances, but a lack of sheer political will, perpetuating the business-as-usual model and prioritizing the interests of corporations and billionaires over those of people and the planet.

54. Asia and the Pacific presents an even worse picture, caught amid the multidimensional crises of climate, the cost of living, debt, inequalities, democratic narratives and security, with many countries facing crises that are exacerbating one another. In the publication *Asia and the Pacific SDG Progress Report 2025* of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, it is shown that only 16 out of the 117 targets with data are on track to be achieved by 2030, while 18 show regressive trends requiring urgent reversal. It is also shown that the continuing regression in Goal 13, with insufficient data to measure progress on Goals 5 and 16 and lagging behind the rest of the world in relation to Goals 4, 8, 13, 14 and 17 pose a precarious scenario for the region. Overall, the report reflects that half of the targets are behind while the other half is immeasurable due to insufficient data, despite being two thirds into the timeline, notwithstanding the post-coronavirus disease (COVID-19) and other emergent crises, indicating that the region is unlikely to achieve the Goals before 2060.

55. Against the backdrop of critical failures, and amid recent assaults on intergovernmentally agreed normative principles, peoples' rights, women's human rights and civic spaces for democratic dialogue and accountability, the credibility and efficiency of the multilateral system rests on delivering the transformation promised in the Goals. Now is the time for international solidarity to defend democracy, dignity and human rights, abolish patriarchal authoritarianism, dismantle neoliberal capitalism, ensure climate justice, and equitably spend on bread and books rather than bombs. It is also the time for development justice to catalyse redistributive, socioeconomic, environmental and political transformative shifts.

56. The Asia-Pacific Regional Civil Society Organization Engagement Mechanism refuses to let another decade pass in which political and economic power converge, robbing people of their human rights, dignity, diversity, democratic values and the potential to live safely on this planet. Billions in the global South see the Fourth International Conference on Financing for Development, the high-level political forum on sustainable development, the World Social Development Summit and implementation of the Pact for the Future, with hope that the multilateral collective restores public trust before it is too late for both people and the planet.

XI. Africa Regional Mechanism for Major Groups and other Stakeholders

57. Africa is still confronted with diverse challenges that negatively affect it in a multidimensional manner. Leading into the second 10-year implementation plan of the African Union Agenda 2063, and with five years left to achieve the Goals, it is time that Africa capitalized more on its own resources and solutions.

58. The Africa Regional Mechanism for Major Groups and other Stakeholders is therefore insisting on the adoption of African perspectives in reviewing the Goals under consideration in 2025. Subsequently, it advocates the following positions:

59. **Goal 3: Good health and well-being.** Self-reliance is crucial for Africa to ensure the good health and well-being of its people. It is important to valorize domestic knowledge in education for health and to leverage domestic assets to create the facilities necessary to produce needed drugs and vaccines. Providing and better organizing existing relevant human resources locally should also be encouraged.

60. **Goal 5: Gender equality.** Despite possible cultural barriers that need to be well identified and removed progressively through a sound adaptation of curricula. Despite possible cultural barriers that need to be well identified, ensuring the equal chances at earlier stages of education of boys and girls is the way to proceed.

61. **Goal 8: Decent work and economic growth.** It is essential to enhance economic prosperity by the transformation of African natural resources into finished products and also promote decent working conditions for all on the Continent.

62. **Goal 14: Life below water.** Africa should work to launch a continental strategy aimed at managing and protecting the Continent's ecosystems. The strategy should be focused on enhancing the integration of the private sector and relevant stakeholders into the framework of supporting scientific cooperation and developing research capabilities aimed at achieving the sustainable management of water resources and the resources within them.

63. **Goal 17: Partnerships for the Goals.** Africa must adhere to and insist on international conventions on tax, debt and international development cooperation as it negotiates in the Fourth International Conference on Financing for Development process and during the World Social Summit. The best pathway for Africa towards

sustainable development is to work more on rendering intra-African cooperation truly effective. Africa should also seek to build synergies among the diverse umbrella bodies of civil society organizations to ensure a vibrant and strong presence of civil society organizations on the Continent and in other international spaces.

64. The Africa Regional Mechanism for Major Groups and other Stakeholders entreats Member States to reaffirm their commitment to the 2030 Agenda, keeping in mind Agenda 2063 and to increase spaces for civil society.

65. The Mechanism calls upon Member States to:

- (a) Redeem their commitments to financing the Goals;
- (b) Increase spaces of civil society;
- (c) Promote multilateralism at all levels;
- (d) Adhere to principles that address systemic inequalities.

XII. Economic Commission for Europe regional civil society engagement mechanism

66. The Economic Commission for Europe region is challenged by governments reducing financial aid to developing countries and increasing defence expenditure. Civil society is under pressure. Governments are limiting civil society organizations to service roles and restricting their advocacy, with some Member States rejecting the 2030 Agenda and the Goals. This weakens how regional challenges can be addressed and undermines the theme of the 2025 high-level political forum on sustainable development. The following Goals under review:

67. **Goal 3: Good health and well-being.** Five years after COVID-19, civil society organizations are vital in improving health for all. Health policies must address ageing populations, gender equality and the impact of climate change. Health services must include migrants and asylum-seekers, and access to sexual and reproductive health, mental health and HIV care must be expanded. A life-course approach is necessary for universal health coverage and social protection, given the region's demographics.

68. **Goal 5: Gender equality.** Wars, authoritarianism and new repressive laws are eroding democracy and the rights of women, gender-diverse people and human rights defenders. Examples include foreign agents laws across the region, the anti-gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex propaganda law in Georgia, the shelving of the European Union equal treatment directive, and the scrapping of anti-racist programmes and those focused on diversity, equity and inclusion. Progress has been made regarding increased legal recognition of gender-based violence and femicide. Repressive laws must be removed, and funding for feminist movements and gender equality programmes must be assured.

69. **Goal 8: Decent work and economic growth.** Decent jobs and social dialogue are a foundation for sustainable development. Older persons and young people must be included in the workforce and intergenerational discussions on employment supported. Governments and employers must comply with fundamental rights, social protection and decent work commitments outlined, for example, in ILO conventions. Policies should support informal workers, caregivers, people with disabilities and domestic workers. The rights of migrants and asylum-seekers to social protection and jobs with fair wages should be ensured. Partnerships with civil society organizations should deliver employment data, including on age, gender and disability. Lifelong learning and digital skills training should be invested in and made widely available.

70. **Goal 14: Life below water.** The marine ecosystems of the Economic Commission for Europe region are threatened by war and post-war-related pollution, overfishing and climate change. Explosives, plastics and noise pollution harm biodiversity, disrupting marine habitats. Stronger regulations, investment in scientific research and inclusive policymaking are needed, together with government commitment to sustainable ocean management, peace and cross-sector partnerships.

71. **Goal 17: Partnerships for the Goals.** Goal 17 reporting must improve, with stronger accountability by governments and greater support for civil society organizations. A legal framework is needed to ensure transparency, adherence to global standards and proper funding. Trust in aid financing must be rebuilt. Civil society organizations facing cuts in funding and government restrictions need solidarity and support.

XIII. Communities that experience discrimination based on work and descent

72. The present summary contribution provides highlights of some key findings of 17 reports⁹ from 15 countries, focusing on advances, recommendations and achievements related to communities that experience discrimination based on work and descent.

73. **Goal 17.** Progress includes adoption by Africa of a resolution on rights of communities that experience discrimination based on work and descent by the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights, the inclusion of Quilombolas in the census in Brazil, the new mechanism for reporting hate speech against Roma in Germany and continued allocation of dedicated budgets for Dalit communities in India and Nepal.

74. **Goal 3.** Key health indicators reveal lower life expectancy (indicator 3.4.1), higher maternal (3.1.1) and infant mortality rates (3.2.1), and low immunization coverage (3.3.2) in communities that experience discrimination based on work and descent. Roma women in Bulgaria and Hungary face higher maternal mortality, while Dalit women in India and women in Nigeria and Pakistan in communities that experience discrimination based on work and descent lack reproductive healthcare access (3.7.1 and 3.7.3). Discriminatory healthcare practices (3.8.1) and inadequate infrastructure exacerbate these issues. Gender-based violence remains pervasive, with limited access to gender-based violence services (3.5.1), as seen among Quilombola women in Brazil and Palenquera women in Colombia.

75. To address these challenges, universal health coverage (indicator 3.8.1) must be ensured by removing social barriers and providing affordable or free services (3.8.2). Strengthening data collection systems (3.b.3) and promoting community participation in health policy development (3.d.1) are critical. Addressing gender-based violence requires robust protection mechanisms and access to legal, social and health services (3.5.1) for survivors.

76. **Goal 5.** Strengthening legal frameworks (indicator 5.1.1) is crucial to protect rights and ensure accountability. For example, Roma women in Hungary lack water access, and Haratine women in Mauritania endure slavery-like conditions. Eliminating systemic discrimination and violence (5.2.1) through education and support strategies is vital, as 70 per cent of Dalit women in India face verbal abuse and 90 per cent experience healthcare discrimination. Ensuring universal healthcare and reproductive

⁹ See <https://globalforumcdwd.org/publications/>.

rights (5.6.1) through targeted policies and community engagement is equally important.

77. **Goal 8.** Enforcing anti-discrimination laws and promoting inclusive hiring practices (indicators 8.5.1 and 8.5.2) can ensure equal employment access. Expanding early education and vocational training for youth in communities that experience discrimination based on work and descent (8.6.1) can reduce the proportion of youth not in education, employment, or training. Extending labour rights and social security to informal workers (8.8.1, 8.8.2) is essential. Digital literacy training and affordable technology access (8.2.1) can bridge the digital divide. Recognizing traditional roles and providing rehabilitation programmes (8.7.1) can address historical exploitation. Affirmative action programmes (8.5.1) can increase representation of communities that experience discrimination based on work and descent in formal sectors, while banning manual scavenging and improving the conditions of sanitation workers (8.8.1) can eliminate hazardous labour.

XIV. Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex people

78. The 2030 Agenda includes the vow to leave no one behind, yet increasing inequalities and rollbacks of rights disproportionately affect lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex people, especially transgender and non-binary people. Systemic discrimination is worsening barriers to healthcare and work worldwide. Extreme-right rhetoric denies some lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex identities and erases legal protections. Climate change, economic instability, conflicts and health crises further harm vulnerable communities, with lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex people hit hardest.

79. The theme “Advancing sustainable, inclusive, science- and evidence-based solutions for the 2030 Agenda and its Sustainable Development Goals” underscores the need for human-rights-based, intersectional and community-centred responses that include lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex people.

80. **Goal 3: Good health and well-being.** Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex people, especially transgender and non-binary people, face systemic healthcare barriers, such as discrimination, denial of gender-affirming care and exclusion from coverage. Recommendations:

(a) Universal public quality healthcare for all, including gender-affirming care and mental health services;

(b) Increased health financing and health policies that are inclusive of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex people, particularly in developing countries, to close healthcare gaps.

81. **Goal 5: Gender equality.** Gender equality requires fully including gender-diverse people. Patriarchal systems enforcing strict norms hinder progress. Recommendations:

(a) Full legal recognition and protections for transgender and non-binary people, safeguarding their rights amid growing attacks, as a prerequisite for gender equality;

(b) Meaningful engagement of LGBTI communities in policies designed to improve the lives of all women and girls, ensuring that no one is left behind in gender equity efforts.

82. **Goal 8: Decent work and economic growth.** Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex people face economic marginalization due to workplace

discrimination, lack of legal gender recognition and limited financial access. Recommendations:

(a) Workplace protections and inclusive labour policies to eliminate economic marginalization of LGBTI people and ensure equal employment opportunities;

(b) Strengthening financial inclusion mechanisms, including access to credit and entrepreneurship opportunities for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex people.

83. **Goal 14: Life below water.** Climate justice must include lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex people, who face disproportionate displacement, migration and livelihood loss from environmental degradation. Recommendations:

(a) Climate resilience strategies that prioritize vulnerable communities, ensuring their inclusion in environmental policymaking;

(b) Equitable coastal and marine resource management policies that integrate social equity and the needs of marginalized populations.

84. **Goal 17: Partnerships for the Goals.** Recommendations:

(a) Stronger partnerships between governments, civil society and the private sector to safeguard human rights and advance inclusive solutions;

(b) Strengthening asylum pathways: countries must adopt inclusive asylum policies that recognize the persecution of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex people as a legitimate ground for refugee protection, ensuring the safety of those facing discrimination.

85. To fulfil the 2030 Agenda, governments and institutions must adopt interconnected, evidence-based solutions. Aligned with the theme of the 2025 high-level political forum on sustainable development, efforts must uphold everyone's rights, including those of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex people. Fragmented solutions are not an option – crises are interconnected, as must be responses thereto. By breaking silos and championing human rights, the international community can build a more inclusive future.

XV. Civil Society Financing for Development Mechanism

86. Implementing the 2030 Agenda and achieving the Goals requires systemic, macro measures that can only be advanced by democratizing global economic governance. This is where the financing for development process comes in, as a space to advance the systemic reforms that urgently need to be seen. Despite attempts to quantify the development finance gap to achieve the Goals, it is important to recognize that investing more money in a system that is poorly designed and has been maintaining and deepening inequalities within and between countries will not be a sustainable solution. Instead, in order to expand the fiscal and policy space of global South countries and enable their right to development, Member States should:

(a) Agree on a United Nations framework convention on international tax cooperation to comprehensively address tax havens, tax abuse by multinational corporations and other illicit financial flows;

(b) Agree on a United Nations framework convention on sovereign debt that would comprehensively address unsustainable and illegitimate debt, including through extensive debt cancellation;

- (c) Establish an international public credit rating agency at the United Nations that could provide long-term ratings, as well as counterbalance the influence of private credit rating agencies;
 - (d) Agree on a United Nations convention on international development cooperation, including by establishing a mechanism for the fulfilment of the trillions in unmet aid debt owed to the global South through decades;
 - (e) Elaborate a United Nations multilateral agreement for a coordinated and permanent termination of investor-State dispute settlement mechanisms that has empowered transnational corporations to sue governments in confidential tribunals on a range of issues, including debt, tax and climate action;
 - (f) Assess systemic risks posed by unregulated or inadequately regulated financial sector instruments and actors;
 - (g) Establish a United Nations intergovernmental global technology assessment mechanism to fill the vacuum in the governance of digital technologies, including digital finance technologies, and assess their impacts on society, the environment and people;
 - (h) Establish a United Nations intergovernmental process to review and transform international financial institutions and multilateral development banks, leading to an overhaul of the international public finance architecture;
 - (i) Establish a United Nations intergovernmental process to conduct a thorough review of the sustainable development outcomes, fiscal and human rights impact of public-private partnerships, blended finance and other financing instruments established to leverage private finance;
 - (j) Ensure fiscal space and scale up international cooperation for decent jobs creation and universal social protection in line with the Goals and ILO standards.
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