
Outcome Report: High-Level Political Forum 2025

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Date: July 2025

Venue: United Nations Headquarters and Associated Platforms

I. Background

The 2025 High-Level Political Forum (HLPF) and World Science Day Summit were convened at a pivotal moment for the global community. With less than five years remaining to achieve the 2030 Agenda, these events gathered heads of state, policymakers, scientists, civil society representatives, private sector leaders, and youth advocates to address mounting global challenges. The discussions underscored the urgency of accelerating progress across all Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in a context marked by rising poverty, climate change, gender inequality, geopolitical instability, and technological disruption.

The overarching theme, *Unlocking Tomorrow's Solutions Today*, reflected a shared recognition that the pace of change must dramatically increase if the SDGs are to remain within reach. Across plenary sessions, high-level panels, and side events, participants emphasized the need for systemic reform, innovative financing, inclusive governance, and science-based policymaking as central pillars for delivering on global commitments.

II. Advancing the Science-Policy Interface

The summit reaffirmed that science and innovation remain critical enablers of sustainable development, but persistent fragmentation between research and policy continues to hinder their transformative potential. Dr. Pamela McElwee presented the IPBES Nexus Assessment as a vital instrument for promoting systems-based solutions that address interconnected challenges such as environmental degradation, food security, and human health. She called for long-term, flexible funding to sustain scientific innovation and urged greater investment in early-career researchers, particularly in the Global South, to strengthen local capacities.

Colombia showcased its Multistakeholder Platform for the SDGs, an open-access digital tool that promotes evidence-based decision-making through data dashboards and participatory

analytics. This platform was recognized as a model for fostering trust, transparency, and a “culture of evidence” that values both scientific expertise and local knowledge.

The role of emerging technologies, particularly artificial intelligence, featured prominently in the dialogue. Dr. Baba Tunde Abidoye of UNDP stressed that AI has the potential to transform development by enhancing data systems, improving health outcomes, and driving climate resilience. However, he warned of the dangers of “digital colonialism” if these technologies remain concentrated in the hands of a few, calling instead for inclusive and gender-responsive digital infrastructures that prioritize equity and access.

Participants collectively agreed that the current question—“What can science do for us?”—must be reframed as “What systems do we need to make science equitable and useful for all?”

III. Financing and Innovation for the SDGs

Mobilizing financial resources and closing the innovation gap emerged as critical priorities. Speakers highlighted the structural shortcomings of the global economic architecture, which continue to disadvantage low- and middle-income countries and limit their access to affordable financing for development. Robert Kirkpatrick highlighted the “velocity gap” in technology adoption, observing that innovations often take years to scale beyond their origin cities, thereby widening global inequalities. His presentation of the Open Twin initiative—an open-source simulation platform for urban resilience—was welcomed as a step toward democratizing technological solutions.

Sanda Ojiambo emphasized the need to build trust and foster partnerships between the public and private sectors through blended finance mechanisms. She urged policymakers to demystify financing instruments and adopt transparent frameworks that can incentivize private investment without compromising the public good. In contrast, Emilia Reyes expressed disappointment in the limited ambition of the Seville Commitment, warning that continuing business-as-usual approaches will only entrench existing inequalities.

Member States announced several significant commitments during the session. Ghana pledged to establish a \$1 billion innovation hub to drive local development and reduce the productivity gap between developed and developing economies. Italy launched an innovation platform aimed at empowering African entrepreneurs, while France reiterated its commitment to responsible AI development and the use of open-source technologies. China and Russia underscored the importance of inclusive financial systems rooted in South-South cooperation and mutual respect.

IV. Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment

The summit marked the 30th anniversary of the Beijing Declaration on Women's Rights, a milestone that provided an opportunity to renew global commitments to gender equality. Discussions revealed persistent disparities in access to education, economic opportunities, and digital resources. Women globally continue to earn approximately 20 percent less than men and remain significantly underrepresented in leadership positions and STEM fields. The digital divide is particularly acute: 129 million girls lack internet access, and 90 percent of girls in low-income countries are disconnected from digital learning opportunities.

Several governments outlined new measures to accelerate progress under SDG 5. Uganda reported a 50 percent reduction in child marriages and announced that women now hold 48 percent of seats in parliament. Mexico introduced a Women's Bill of Rights and expanded vocational training to increase women's participation in the labor market. Finland and Norway pledged to strengthen gender-responsive budgeting and invest in leadership opportunities for women, while China reaffirmed its longstanding commitment to gender equality through the enactment of over 100 laws that protect women.

V. Decent Work and Inclusive Economies

Economic inequality and labor informality were identified as significant barriers to achieving SDG 8 on decent work and economic growth. With one in five young people currently out of education or employment, and women disproportionately represented in vulnerable jobs, urgent action is required to create inclusive and resilient labor markets.

The side event on Cooperatives for Social Justice showcased cooperative models as vehicles for advancing economic democracy and social equity. Speakers from Brazil, Paraguay, and Ecuador presented compelling examples of how cooperatives have expanded access to healthcare, strengthened financial inclusion, and supported climate resilience in local communities. Participants called for a renewed policy focus on cooperatives as engines for inclusive growth, while also urging the development of global standards to safeguard platform workers and regulate the impact of AI on employment.

VI. Health Equity and SDG Interlinkages

Health was consistently described as the foundation of sustainable development, with participants warning that current trends threaten to reverse decades of progress under SDG 3. Magda Robalo called for an urgent shift toward universal health coverage, equitable access to reproductive health services, and sustainable financing mechanisms that prioritize prevention and resilience. Ibrahim Abukar underscored the need for health systems that integrate social determinants, from housing to education, and stressed the importance of community-based models for service delivery.

Digital health technologies were presented as critical enablers of equity, particularly in resource-constrained settings. However, speakers cautioned that these innovations must be deployed within frameworks that uphold human rights and protect marginalized populations, including LGBTQ+ communities, who continue to experience systemic discrimination in health systems worldwide.

VII. Energy and Climate Action

The Energy Progress Report 2025 revealed that 705 million people remain without electricity and 666 million continue to rely on solid fuels for cooking. Although renewable energy has emerged as the most affordable pathway to sustainability, financing shortfalls persist, particularly in developing countries. UNDP reported significant progress in solarizing schools and clinics globally, but warned that systemic reforms are needed to scale such interventions. Achieving a just and inclusive energy transition will require not only technological innovation and investment, but also political courage, coordinated governance, and long-term planning.

VIII. Civil Society and Youth Engagement

Civil society participation was recognized as a cornerstone of inclusive multilateralism. ECOSOC President Bob Rae reaffirmed that civil society is not a peripheral actor but an essential partner in delivering the SDGs. He called for deeper institutional reforms to protect civic space, provide sustainable financing for grassroots organizations, and create formal avenues for civil society to co-lead global initiatives.

Youth advocates urged governments and international organizations to operationalize meaningful intergenerational partnerships by guaranteeing youth representation in key decision-making bodies, including those addressing financing for development and emerging technologies such as artificial intelligence. They emphasized that global priorities cannot be met while trillions of dollars are allocated to warfare rather than development.

IX. Recommendations

The summit concluded with a strong consensus on the need for immediate and coordinated action across several fronts. Participants recommended strengthening science-policy interfaces by investing in open data systems, community-driven innovation, and interdisciplinary collaboration. They stressed that gender equality must remain at the core of sustainable development strategies, supported by robust financial commitments, measurable targets, and transparent accountability mechanisms.

Reforming the global financial architecture was deemed essential to operationalizing the Seville Commitment and ensuring that financing frameworks are equitable and responsive to the needs of developing countries. Governments and multilateral organizations were urged to institutionalize youth participation in all major decision-making platforms, including Financing for Development processes and global AI governance structures.

On climate and energy, participants called for accelerated investment in renewable energy through concessional financing and public-private partnerships, while embedding principles of justice and equity in national energy transition strategies. Finally, the summit highlighted the importance of social justice in economic reforms, advocating for cooperative models and inclusive labor policies that protect workers' rights in an era of digital transformation.

Conclusion

The 2025 High-Level Political Forum and World Science Day Summit reaffirmed that achieving the 2030 Agenda remains within reach, but only if the world adopts bold and transformative action. Incremental change will no longer suffice; systemic reforms, inclusive governance, and sustainable financing must become the norm rather than the exception. Innovation must serve humanity, not deepen inequalities, and multilateralism must be anchored in solidarity, trust, and shared responsibility.

The next five years will determine whether the global community delivers on its promise of a just, sustainable future for all. The time for action is now.