



Progress Towards the Sustainable Development Goals

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Introduction

In 1945, the United Nations came into existence with the mission to preserve peace and promote better lives for all. With this objective in mind, in 2015, the 193 Member States of the UN agreed on the *Sustainable Development Goals* (SDGs) to guide development everywhere, to be achieved in 2030. The SDGs included 17 general goals and 169 specific targets.¹ These consensus goals and targets established the development framework for the entire world.

But as we approach 2030, the SDGs face great uncertainty. Can the goals be achieved? The United States has repudiated the entire SDG process. Will more countries decide it is more in

their national interests to abandon their demands?

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

Since 2015, there have been achievements in progress toward Sustainable Development Goals. These include the decline of extreme poverty, decline in child marriage, decrease in fatal diseases such as HIV and malaria, and greater access to electricity. These achievements improved millions of lives worldwide.²

However, in 2020, the pandemic that shook the globe, Covid-19, greatly affected the Sustainable Development Goals. In fact, Covid-19 negatively impacted almost all 17 SDGs, either hindering or regressing their progress. For instance, the stark restriction of economic activities worldwide negatively impacted the progress of SDGs one, two and three - no poverty, zero hunger, and good health and well-being.³ Additionally, the slowdown of economies led to reductions in workforce,

¹ Ohanes, R. (2025, July 13). *Road to 2030: A brief history of the sustainable development goals (sdgs) - virchow foundation: The virchow prize – towards health for all*. Virchow Foundation, 13 July 2025, <https://virchowprize.org/vf-road-to-2030-history-of-sdgs/>

² United Nations. (n.d.). *The Sustainable Development Goals - United Nations Sustainable Development*. United Nations,

<https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/development-goals/>

³ Yuan, H., Wang, X., Gao, L., Wang, T., Liu, B., Fang, D., & Gao, Y. (2023, June 8). *Progress towards the sustainable development goals has been slowed by indirect effects of the COVID-19 pandemic*. Nature News, <https://www.nature.com/articles/s43247-023-00846-x#Sec2>



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negatively impacting SDG 8 - decent work and economic growth, and SDG 10 - Reduced inequalities. Furthermore, countries experienced a severe depletion of resources, greatly hindering SDG 9 - industry, innovation, and infrastructure.

The 17 SDGs

- Goal 1: No Poverty
- Goal 2: Zero hunger
- Goal 3: Good health and well-being
- Goal 4: Quality education
- Goal 5: Gender equality
- Goal 6: Clean water and sanitation
- Goal 7: Affordable and clean energy
- Goal 8: Decent work and economic growth
- Goal 9: Industry, Innovation, and Infrastructure
- Goal 10: Reduced inequality
- Goal 11: Sustainable cities and communities
- Goal 12: Responsible consumption and production
- Goal 13: Climate action
- Goal 14: Life below water
- Goal 15: Life on land
- Goal 16: Peace, justice and strong institutions
- Goal 17: Partnerships for the goals

The pandemic confiscated the livelihood of billions of people around the world, causing increased mortality rates, poor health, and economic instability. As a result, nations inevitably resorted to strengthening their own economies, regressing the partnerships desired

by SDG 17. Covid-19 rendered every nation for themselves, leaving the Sustainable Development Goals significantly neglected and stalled.

Current Situation

While there have been some noteworthy successes within the past decade, the harsh reality is that the momentum of progress is severely insufficient to achieve the 2030 Agenda. According to the 2025 UN report, “We face a global development emergency.”⁴ Conflicts and rising geopolitical tensions, such as the Russia-Ukraine War and the Gaza-Israel Conflict, have greatly hindered the progression of the Sustainable Development Goals. Moreover, further setbacks have arisen from economic instabilities and drastic climate change such as global warming from record-break CO₂ levels.

Consequently, out of all the SDG targets, only 35% are making moderate progress, whereas, approximately half of the targets are moving too slowly and 18% of the targets are in a detrimental regression.

The effects of this inadequacy have left over 800 million people living in extreme poverty with one and 12 people facing hunger. Even more so, billions around the world lack access to safe drinking water, sanitation, and hygiene. The gender gap is still wide with women carrying 2.5 times of unpaid work compared to men. These setbacks have caused a need in “Six critical SDG transitions: food systems, energy, digital connectivity, education, jobs and social protection, and climate change and biodiversity.”⁵

While the overall global sentiment is that sustainable development is still crucial, several countries are starting to lose their traction with their value towards the sustainable development

⁴ United Nations. (n.d.). - *SDG indicators*. United Nations, <https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/report/2025/>

⁵ Ibid.



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goals. Conflicts and tensions are dominating agendas of the United Nations, taking their focus away from the Sustainable Development Goals. Even more so, SDG funding has taken a detrimental hit, leaving developing countries in dire states. In 2024, the Financing for Sustainable Development Report emphasized a \$4 trillion dollar gap in SDG funding leaves several developing countries stagnant in growth. The UN Secretary General urged a “surge in investment” to overcome the increasingly growing gaps.⁶

However, government spending in the countries have pursued self-interests instead of aligning with SGD goals and private investors lack the motivation to invest.⁷

Overall, the global economy remains far off course from satisfying the 2030 agenda, and without proper implementations to rectify the progress, the 17 Sustainable Development Goals may be left undone.

UN Action

With only four years left, the United Nations has an abundance of work to do in order to achieve the 2030 Agenda. According to the SDG 2025 report, the United Nations and participating countries “must maximize the final five years for real commitment and delivery.”⁸ To achieve this sentiment, the UN has to address the primary deficit towards development: financing. In order to get the SDGs back on track, the United

Nations must find a way to redirect funds to development measures.

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS



The United Nations held the Fourth International Conference on Financing for Development (FFD4) on 30 June 2025 in Seville, Spain.⁹ During the conference, 192 of

⁶ United Nations. (n.d.). *UN chief urges “surge in investment” to overcome \$4 trillion financing gap*. United Nations, <https://www.un.org/en/desa/un-chief-urges-%E2%80%99surge-investment%E2%80%99-overcome-4-trillion-financing-gap>

⁷ United Nations. (n.d.). *Financing for Sustainable Development Report 2024 | Financing for Sustainable Development Office*. United Nations, <https://financing.desa.un.org/iatf/report/financing-sustainable-development-report-2024>

⁸ United Nations. (n.d.). *SDG indicators*, op.cit.

⁹ United Nations. (n.d.). *Press release | international conference on financing for development opens with a renewed global framework to tackle Sustainable Development Challenges - United Nations Sustainable Development*. United Nations, <https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/blog/2025/06/ffd4-opening-renewed-framework-2/>



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the UN Member States established a new consensus financing framework that addresses the debt crises and works to rectify the \$4 trillion gap in sustainable development. With the Sevilla Commitment, the UN can effectively monitor the financial contributions with strong data and statistical systems.¹⁰

There are several measures the UN can implement to build progress towards sustainable development from hosting conferences such as the High-Level Political Forum and World Summits. However, one problem that the United Nations faces is compliance. While the overall global sentiment is that sustainable development for *all* is important, the UN recognizes that each country is responsible for their own economy.

with the Seville Commitment in mind, countries that are well-off are expected to financially support the development of poorer countries. Even though countries pledged to uphold the commitment the UN has no enforcement power to ensure this. Essentially, the United Nations can persistently persuade and potentially incentive countries to contribute, they are not able to make any binding demands.

Recent ECOSOC Resolutions

¹⁰ *We won't fill the SDG financing gap without strong data and statistical systems.* Global Partnership for Sustainable Development Data . (n.d.), <https://www.data4sdgs.org/blog/we-wont-fill-sdg-financing-gap-without-strong-data-and-statistical-systems>

¹¹ United Nations. (n.d.). *E/RES/2024/2 - An Inclusive Representative Statistical Commission to*

E/RES/2024/2 - An Inclusive Representative Statistical Commission to Leave No One Behind:

This resolution, adopted on 12 July 2024 focuses on advocating for the strengthening of SDG statistical systems to ensure they are precise, inclusive, and comprehensive. This resolution emphasizes the importance of transparency, reliability, and accountability in progress tracking and monitoring. This resolution correlates with SDG 17 (Partnership for the Goals), target 17.18 (statistical capacities).¹¹

E/RES/2024/3 - Mainstreaming a Gender Perspective Across Policies: This resolution, adopted on 12 July 2024, seeks to implement gender equality alignments into UN policies, programs, and initiatives. It aims to ensure that all females feel included and supported in both national and international development efforts. The criteria of resolution directly corresponds with SDG 5 (Gender Equality).¹²

E/RES/2024/6 - Fostering Social Development and Social Justice to Accelerate SDG

Implementation: This resolution, adopted on 12 July 2024, focuses on social development by emphasizing the importance of social policies and justice towards the advancement of the 2030 Agenda. It directly aligns with SDG 1 (No Poverty) and SDG 10 (Reduced Inequality) by reaffirming the “leave no one behind” sentiment of the SGDs.¹³

E/RES/2024/18 - Doha Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the decade 2022-2031: This resolution, adopted on

Leave No One Behind, United Nations, <https://docs.un.org/en/E/RES/2024/2>

¹² United Nations. (n.d.). *E/RES/2024/3 - Mainstreaming a Gender Perspective Across Policies.* United Nations, <https://docs.un.org/en/E/RES/2024/3>

¹³ United Nations. (n.d.). *E/RES/2024/6 - Fostering Social Development and Social Justice to Accelerate*



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2 August 2024, focuses on reemphasizing the importance of implementing the Doha Programme of Action (2022-2031) to support and advocate for Least Developed Countries (LDCs). It highlights areas of difficulties, lacking, and struggles of LDCs that directly align with SDG implementations. Specifically, the resolution significantly corresponds with SDG 1 (No Poverty), SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth), SDG 10 (Reduced Inequalities), and SDG 17 (Partnerships for the Goals).¹⁴

E/RES/2025/19 - Science, Technology, and Innovation for Development: This resolution emphasizes the necessity of science, technology, and innovation (STI) as key enablers of sustainable development. It affirms the need for global cooperation towards knowledge and technological advancements across all sectors. This resolution has ties with SDG 9 (Industry, Innovation, and Infrastructure) and SDG 17 (Partnerships for the Goals).¹⁵

Country and Bloc Positions

The African Union has a long term approach to sustainable development, as highlighted by the AU Agenda 2063. While the Agenda 2063 goals correspond significantly with the UN SDGs, given the substantial financial gaps between Africa and the rest of the world, the majority of countries in the African Union remain highly off

SDG Implementation. United Nations, <https://docs.un.org/en/E/RES/2024/6>

¹⁴ United Nations. (n.d.). *E/RES/2024/18 - Doha Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the decade 2022-2031.* United Nations, <https://docs.un.org/en/E/RES/2024/18>

¹⁵ United Nations. (n.d.). *E/RES/2025/19 - Science, Technology, and Innovation for Development.* United Nations, <https://docs.un.org/en/E/RES/2025/19>

¹⁶ African Union. (n.d.). *Linking agenda 2063 and the sdgs | african union.* African Union. <https://au.int/en/agenda2063/sdgs>

track in achieving the UN 2030 SDG goals.¹⁶ Positively, the SDG climate-related targets have been met by over half of the countries.

However, the stark reality is that SDG developmental measures have rarely been implemented by any of the African countries. As a result, countries in the African Union face many major extensive challenges, with poverty, insufficient health, and hunger topping the issues.¹⁷ With Agenda 2063 in foresight, there is potential for the African Union to meet development targets, however, their current track leaves them far off from the UN 2030 deadline.

China stresses a domestically-oriented approach toward implementation of the SDGs. China's goals and policies align with the UN SDG goals, and several national development plans have been executed. However, China's approach to the can be selective. Chinese policies tend to favor economic and GDP growth as well as political priorities, neglecting SDG issues of workplace inequalities and environmental pollution. This creates significant discrepancies between the government and corporate sectors in China. While government policies correspond with the SDGs in some aspects, SDG alignment in the business sector is uncharted territory.¹⁸

European Union: Customarily, “European countries continue to lead the SDG index” with countries such as Finland, Sweden, and Denmark ranking in the top percentiles. The European Union is committed to implement the

¹⁷ *Assessing progress against the UN's sdgs and Au's agenda 2063.* Mo Ibrahim Foundation, <https://mo.ibrahim.foundation/news/2025/assessing-progress-against-uns-sdgs-and-aus-agenda-2063#:~:text=Two%20thirds%20of%20the%20way,a%20least%20one%20African%20country>

¹⁸ *Introduction.* The Conference Board. (n.d.), <https://www.conference-board.org/ChinaSustainabilityGoals#:~:text=economic%20scenario%20looks%20large%20if,business%20value%20driver%20in%20China>



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SDGs into their framework, making the institution a leading global partner.¹⁹ The EU has been a primary donor towards developing assistance, contributing ample donations to SDG funds on a regular basis.²⁰ According to the “EU Voluntary Review on the Implementation of the 2030 Agenda (EUVR), the European Union’s goals directly align with sustainable development, with their actions prioritizing the five P’s: “People, Planet, Prosperity, Peace, and Partnership.”²¹ By embracing their strategy, the Global Gateway and other “green” practices the European Union plans to invest over EUR 300 billion in securing the digital, energy, and transport sectors, as well as strengthening health, education, and research systems around the world.²²

Members of the EU try to make development aid highly conditional, dependent on policy choices or the countries they work with. Above All, they demand progress toward democratization and strengthening democratic institutions. For this reason they no longer cooperate with Russia and are careful dealing with China. They also expect measures to ensure their assistance is not used for corrupt purposes, and that it support their wider goals of supporting ethnic minorities, women and other disadvantaged groups.

Non-Aligned Movement (NAM): the 120 states of the NAM form the UN’s largest and most powerful voting bloc, with more influence over the shaping and implementation of the SDGs than any other bloc. The NAM are strongly

¹⁹ Sustainable Development Solutions Network: A Global Initiative for the United Nations. (n.d.). *A decade after their adoption at the UN, the world remains highly committed to the Sustainable Development Goals - Sustainable Development Solutions Network*. Sustainable Development Solutions Network: A Global Initiative for the United Nations, <https://www.unsdsn.org/news/a-decade-after-their-adoption-at-the-un-the-world-remains-highly-committed-to-the-sustainable-development-goals/>

committed to the SDGs, as a basic tool for channeling global investment and assistance to promote their development. The NAM tend to favor economic development about all. While they generally support other areas such as climate and humanitarian development, they tend to see this as secondary to economic expansion.

To better achieve the SDGs, they routinely seek investment through long-term, low-interest loans from the World Bank, regional investment banks such as the Asian Development Bank, private financial institutions and donor country aid programs and investment. Above all, they demand greater control over all investment in their countries, resisting donor country conditionality, such as donor insistence on political change (democracy) or spending to favor specific groups favored by donors, such as women or indigenous communities.

Russia: Similar to China and the NAM, Russia’s emphasis on sustainable development is nationally-based. While the country supports the SDGs as a universal framework, their position is that countries’ needs should be individualistically-centered, not subject to political pressures. The SDGs should not be completed to solely fulfill a political narrative. Thus, Russia tends to neglect the need for cooperation at high-level SDG meetings and forums, and instead advocate for differing development models that are nationally-specific.

Russia emphasizes that the UN cooperation efforts must respect national sovereignty. With

²⁰ *A year of impact for people and the planet.* annualreport.jointsdgfund.org. (n.d.), <https://annualreport.jointsdgfund.org/2024-accelerating-together-our-collective-journey-in-2024/>

²¹ European Commission. (n.d.). *Sustainable development goals*. International Partnerships, https://international-partnerships.ec.europa.eu/policies/sustainable-development-goals_en

²² European Commission. (n.d.-a). *Global gateway*. International Partnerships, , https://international-partnerships.ec.europa.eu/policies/global-gateway_en



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this sentiment, Russia has formatted their own development initiative through the Coalition for Sustainable Development of Russia (CSDR). The coalition focuses on “protecting human rights, intergenerational equality, and the planet.”²³ Russia relies on the initiatives and reports of the CSDR. Due to their non-interference agenda, political reports are skewed from the CSDR report towards SDG compliance which creates a sense of mistrust towards the country.²⁴

United States: Under the leadership of President Donald Trump, the United States repudiated its previous support for the UN Sustainable Development Goals. President Trump also demands countries reject action on climate change or policies favoring specific groups, such as ethnic minorities or women.

Instead, the United States demands that other countries rely on less on UN-managed programs and more on private investment, preferably from the United States.

The US Counselor for Economic and Social Affairs said during the General Assembly that the “United States rejects and denounces the 2030 Agenda for the Sustainable Development” and will “no longer reaffirm them as a matter of course.”²⁵ The United States was the only country out of 193 UN member states that did not attend the Seville conference. According to the SDR 2025’s Index of Countries, the United States ranks last at 193 for Sustainable Development support.²⁶

²³ Coalition for Sustainable Development of Russia (n.d.), <https://kurs2030.ru/about>

²⁴ *Russia’s SDG progress: Contrasting perspectives at the 2023 UN summit.* Russia’s Coalition for Sustainable Development, 18 September 2023, https://kurs2030.ru/tpost/74hdr19p51-russias-sdg-progress-contrasting-perspec?utm_source=chatgpt.com

²⁵ Segal, M. (2025, March 7). *U.S. rejects UN Sustainable Development Goals.* ESG Today, <https://www.esgtoday.com/u-s-rejects-un-sustainable-development-goals/>

Some Proposals for Action

As sovereign Member States of the UN national delegations at ODUMUNC are free to develop and promote any proposals they think worthwhile. The majority of countries agree that the SDG’s need to be emphasized, yet, the world remains severely off track. The question remains: How can the SDG’s be promoted to bring it from the back of the agenda to the front? How can the United Nations support the completion of the SDGs by 2030? Here are some proposals for action by the ECOSOC.

Emphasize progress toward the SDGs in specific countries. For many UN Member States, progress toward development in Palestine is a high priority. They will support measures to promote progress toward all seventeen SDGs in Palestine. Others will fight what they see as a diversion of global attention from broader, universal human needs and goals.

Emphasize progress on a specific SDG. Rather than divide resources and attention, it might make sense to emphasize a few specific SDGs, to concentrate capabilities to accelerate action where the Member States of the ECOSOC believe it is most needed. Others may fight what they will view as a distortion of the universal process, helping some countries more than others, allowing their own preferred issues to suffer.

²⁶ Sustainable Development Solutions Network: A Global Initiative for the United Nations. (n.d.). *A decade after their adoption at the UN, the world remains highly committed to the Sustainable Development Goals - Sustainable Development Solutions Network.* Sustainable Development Solutions Network: A Global Initiative for the United Nations, <https://www.unsdsn.org/news/a-decade-after-their-adoption-at-the-un-the-world-remains-highly-committed-to-the-sustainable-development-goals/>



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Redistribution/Reallocation of Funds: The disbursement of funds towards SDG targets is highly unequal. Funds need to be dispersed towards all 17 goals and their corresponding targets. The UN should start by analyzing the goals and targets that have the least satisfaction internationally and then reallocate funds towards initiatives that support that goal. Then, the UN should encourage countries to apply the same strategy for their individual nation. This way, the goals that lacked the attention are now receiving proper funding.

With this in mind, it is important to still adequately fund goals that are on a positive track so that they do not veer off course. Thus, the United Nations needs to consider increasing the overall funding towards SDG completion. Similarly, countries must also do the same in order to complete each of the 17 SDG goals on time.

Directing Funds to Poorer Countries: Inequality between and within countries has negatively impacted LDCs. Thus, these countries are highly off track towards the completion of SDG targets. For instance, as emphasized above, significant progress is needed for the entirety of Africa to reach the SDG deadline. Thus, the United Nations should strongly consider redirecting funds to African countries and other poorer countries. The 2030 SDG goal cannot be achieved without the poorer countries. Resolutions have been passed advocating for these least developed countries, so now results need to be shown. The UN needs to persuade countries to fulfill their pledge to these resolutions.

Strengthen International Cooperations: SDG completion has majorly been individualized nationally. Countries are focused on their own development rather than global development. While national development is important the United Nations needs to advocate for more international cooperations. SDG 17 (Partnership for the Goals) needs to become a present reality in order for all of the SDGs to be achieved across the globe. In several resolutions, this partnership was emphasized, however, the results are lacking. The UN needs to lay out strategic plans of cooperation that calls for developed countries helping least developed countries. It needs to be laid out in a way that is appealing to developed countries while still given the necessary aid to the poorer ones. A balance needs to be found between developed countries giving while not hindering their receiving.

Volunteerism Framework: The overall consensus is that the SDGs are a voluntary commitment. With this sentiment, some countries do not feel pressured to achieve the goals by 2030, if even at all. How can the UN persuade countries to commit to voluntary goals? Perhaps, the United Nations needs to promote a different approach to the SDGs? There needs to be a way to incentivize countries to partake in SDG commitment that is less a voluntary facade. Countries should feel obligated to complete the SDGs. Is there a way the United Nations can paint such a framework?



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