Review of the UN 2019 Sustainable Development Goals Report

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SDG 1:

As to SDG 1, the report acknowledged that the world was not on track to end poverty by 2030 as climate change-specifically floods, storms, droughts, heatwaves and other extreme events—had only served to aggravate poverty. On a global scale, whether one was calculating the loss of life or economic loss—disasters had caused enormous suffering. For example, “from 1998 to 2017, direct economic losses from disasters were estimated at almost $3 trillion, of which climate-related disasters accounted for 77 per cent of the total (a rise of 151 per cent from 1978 to 1997). In addition, over that period, climate-related and geophysical disasters claimed an estimated 1.3 million lives. More than 90 per cent of all these disasters were caused by floods, storms, droughts, heatwaves or other extreme weather events.”

The report also went on to consider what effect disasters had on the impoverished global population which consisted of one out of five children out of a total of 736 million people who lived in extreme poverty in 2015; 413 million of them residing in Sub-Saharan Africa. Moreover, the extreme poverty in rural areas was also more than three times higher than in urban areas (17.2% vs 5.3%). Close to half of extremely poor people consisted of children under 14 years (46%).

And if these vulnerable groups did not face enough challenges in just surviving, it would not come as any surprise that poverty was also considered to be major underlying driver of disaster risks in this report. For example, more than 90 per cent of internationally reported deaths due to disasters occurred in low- and middle-income countries. Economic losses resulting from disasters were also much higher in poorer countries, when measured as a percentage of their gross domestic product (GDP). Among the 10 worst disasters in terms of economic damage (when expressed relative to GDP), 8 occurred in low- or middle-income countries.

Other important points which emerged under SDG 1 of this report was that being employed could no longer guarantee anyone a decent standard of living especially where social protection systems failed to reach 55% of the world’s most vulnerable people, including children. For example, only 35% of children received social protection benefits, 41% of women with newborn children received maternity benefits, 28% of persons with severe disabilities received disability benefits, 68% of people above retirement age received pensions and only 22% of people who were unemployed received unemployment benefits.

1 Ibid page 23
2 Ibid page 4 and pages 22-23
3 Ibid page 21
4 Ibid page 4 and pages 22-23
5 Ibid page 4 and pages 22-23
6 Ibid page 21
SDG 2

As to SDG 2, one worrisome trend involved the fact that the number of people who were suffering from hunger had increased to 821 million people who were undernourished in 2017 which represented an increase from 784 million who were undernourished in 2015. Two thirds of undernourished people worldwide lived in two regions: 237 million lived in sub-Saharan African and 277 million lived in Southern Asia. In addition, while stunting and wasting in children was declining it was not doing this fast enough to meet SDG targets. 22% or 149 million Children were, still stunted i.e. chronically undernourished in 2018. Three quarters of these children lived in Southern Asia (39 per cent) and sub-Saharan Africa (36 per cent). In 2018, 49 million children under 5 years of age—or 7.3 per cent of the global under-5 population—suffered from acute undernutrition, or wasting (low weight for height), a condition generally caused by limited nutrient intake and infection. Over half of children with wasting were reported to live in Southern Asia.7

Once again adverse weather conditions were also being described as being key drivers regarding food availability and prices along with prolonged armed conflicts. Although small-scale food producers were considered to be a big part of the solution to world hunger, many small-scale farmers and family farmers were described as being poor and, as a result, had limited capacities or access to techniques or services by which to manage their natural resources on a sustainable basis or to overcome barriers in overcoming weather-induced shocks, adapting to climate change or accessing markets, financial services, information and knowledge. Yet even when the agricultural community needed financial assistance the most, the aid to agriculture was only a fraction of what it was in the 1980s as the share of sector-allocable aid to agriculture fell from nearly 25 per cent in the mid-1980s to only 7 per cent in 2017—a total of 12.6 billion.8

SDG 3:

According to the report, environmental factors also contributed to ill health, such as air pollution and the lack of safely managed water and sanitation. There needed to be much more progress in dealing with malaria and other neglected tropical diseases as billions of people still lacked adequate sanitation or were in close contact with infectious vectors or domestic animals which resulted in them becoming victims to neglected tropical diseases which cost developing economies billions of dollars a year. Moreover, water-related diseases such as malaria continued to increase. For example, from 2016 to 2017 3.5 million more malaria cases were reported in 10 African countries with children under 5 years of age which also accounted for 61% of the malaria deaths worldwide. Yet funding for malaria had also recently stalled just when it was urgently needed.9

According to the report, inadequate water, sanitation and hygiene were also linked to 60 per cent of the disease burden from diarrhea, 100 per cent of the burden from infection through soil-transmitted helminths (parasitic worms), and 16 per cent of the burden owing to malnutrition. These

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7 Ibid page 5 and 24-25
8 Ibid page 24-25
9 Ibid page 28
three conditions led to a total of 870,000 deaths in 2016. This was a needless tragedy as, according to the report, this large disease burden could be significantly reduced if safely managed drinking water and sanitation services were universally available, and good hygiene practices were followed. 

Lapses in environmental health were increasingly recognized as major contributors to illness and death among women and children. For example, both household and ambient air pollution increased the risk of cardiovascular and respiratory diseases, and were major risk factors for non-communicable diseases. In addition, exposure to household air pollution, mainly due to polluting fuels and technologies for cooking, led to around 4 million deaths in 2016. Health risks from this type of pollution were particularly high among women and children, as they typically spend the most time around the stove.

Sustained investment in maternal health, especially in sub-Saharan Africa was also needed to meet the global targets. Despite significant progress in maternal health, in 2017, nearly 300,000 women still died from complications relating to pregnancy and childbirth. Over 90 per cent of them lived in low- and middle-income countries. Complications during pregnancy and childbirth were a leading cause of death among adolescent girls in developing countries with the risk being highest for girls under 15 years of age. Finally, although the under-5 mortality rate has fallen by 49 per cent progress, States were urged to accelerate their efforts to meet the SDG target for under-5 mortality as, if this was done, the lives of an additional 10 million children would be saved by 2030.

Other SDG 3 issues which still needed to be addressed according to this report involved outbreaks of measles and diphtheria which still resulted in many unnecessary deaths. In addition, the decrease in HIV incidences still fell short of its targeting gaps in detection and treatment of tuberculosis along with drug-resistant strains, were pushing progress against the disease off course. All of these ongoing problems were occurring while health personnel were stretched beyond their limit in countries where they were needed most and while countries were still struggling with achieving greater capacity in detecting disease outbreaks or public health events.

SDG4

The report confirmed that even though education enabled upward socioeconomic mobility and, as such, was a key to escaping poverty, millions of children were still out of school. Moreover, shockingly low proficiency rates in reading and mathematics signaled a global learning crisis as more than half of all children and adolescents worldwide were not meeting minimum proficiency standards in reading and mathematics. This remained true despite years of steady growth in enrollment rates. According to the report, globally, an estimated 617 million children and adolescents of primary and lower secondary school age—more than 55 per cent of the global total—

10 Ibid page 29 (“burden” is understood as being the impact of a health problem as measured by financial cost, mortality, morbidity or other indicators).
11 Ibid page 29
12 Ibid page 27
13 Ibid pages 27-29
14 Ibid page 30
lacked minimum proficiency in reading and mathematics in 2015. These rates were the highest in sub-Saharan Africa, where 88 per cent of children (202 million) of primary and lower secondary school age were not proficient in reading, and 84 per cent (193 million) were not proficient in mathematics in 2015. Central and Southern Asia did not fare significantly better either; 81 per cent of their children (241 million) were not proficient in reading, and 76 per cent (228 million) lacked basic mathematical skills.\(^{15}\)

Another issue involved that of early childhood education. It was confirmed to be one of the strongest determinants of a child’s readiness for school regardless of the income level of the child. Yet while the participation in organized learning one year before the official entry age for primary school had risen steadily over the past years, considerable disparities were found among countries, with rates ranging from 7 per cent to nearly 100 per cent. For example, early childhood education participation rate was described as being only 43 per cent in the least developed countries.\(^{16}\)

Moreover, despite progress being made, 750 million adults still could not read and write a simple statement with two thirds of those adults being women. Adult literacy rates were lowest in sub-Saharan Africa and Southern Asia with Southern Asia alone being the home to nearly half (49 per cent) of the global population who were illiterate.\(^{17}\) The global literacy rate for adults (15 years of age and older) also remained lower than among young people with 86 per cent in 2016, compared to 91 per cent for youth (15 to 24 years old). Yet youth literacy still remained low in several countries with most of them being in sub-Saharan Africa. Moreover, even among the youth which were considered to be literate, the report observed that many of them still struggled to become proficient in reading or mathematics at a minimal level.\(^{18}\)

According to the report, progress had also stalled in reaching out-of-school child as 262 million children and adolescents (6 to 17 years old), which represented nearly one fifth of the global population in that age, remained out of school in 2017. Of that number, 64 million were children of primary school age (about 6 to 11 years old), 61 million were adolescents within a lower secondary school age (12 to 14 years old), and 138 million were youth of upper secondary school age (15 to 17 years old).\(^{19}\)

Moreover, the report also acknowledged that girls still faced barriers to education in most regions, particularly in Central Asia, Northern Africa and Western Asia, and sub-Saharan Africa. In those regions, girls of every age were more likely to be excluded from education than boys. For example, in Central Asia, 27% more girls than boys of primary school age were not attending school. At the global level, 118 girls were out of school for every 100 boys. As to the gender issue, the report concluded that that recent successes in reducing the number of children out of school and reducing the gender gap in the out-of-school rate needed to be replicated worldwide to ensure all children, everywhere, are attending school.\(^{20}\)

\(^{15}\) Ibid page 30

\(^{16}\) Ibid page 30

\(^{17}\) Ibid page 31

\(^{18}\) Ibid page 31

\(^{19}\) Ibid page 31

\(^{20}\) Ibid page 7 and page 31
Too many schools in sub-Saharan Africa were also determined to lack the basic elements of a good quality education i.e. trained teachers and adequate facilities. More than half of the schools in sub-Saharan Africa did not have access to basic drinking water, hand washing facilities, the internet or computers.\textsuperscript{21} Another important step towards the goal of good quality education for all involved getting enough trained teachers into classrooms. This problem was particularly applicable to sub-Saharan Africa as, in 2017, that region had the lowest percentages of trained teachers in pre-primary (48 per cent), primary (64 per cent) and secondary (50 per cent) education.\textsuperscript{22}

Finally, as pointed out in this report under such goals as SDG 6 or SDG 13, climate change and water stress were connected to all of the regions which were still experiencing a lack of progress in achieving the goals of SDG 4.\textsuperscript{23}

SDG 5

According to the report, many women and girls also still faced the additional disadvantage of facing the compounded effects of gender and other forms of discrimination.\textsuperscript{24} Women and girls continued to be subjected to harmful practices that profoundly affect their lives. For example, intimate partner violence affected women of all ages and ethnicities, regardless of their socioeconomic status and educational level, in all countries. According to the latest available data from 106 countries, 18 per cent of ever-partnered women and girls 15 to 49 years old experienced physical and/or sexual violence by a current or former intimate partner in the 12 months prior to the survey.\textsuperscript{25}

The report also observed that, although the prevalence of female genital mutilation (FGM) still remained a deeply troubling human-rights violation that affected at least 200 million women in the 30 countries with approximately half of this practice being concentrated in West Africa. Moreover, on average, about one in three girls 15 to 19 years old in those countries were still being subjected to FGM.\textsuperscript{26}

As to child marriage, the report determined that the global burden of child marriage appeared to be shifting from Southern Asia to sub-Saharan Africa, where levels of child marriage had “declined at a

\textsuperscript{21} Ibid page 7 and page 31
\textsuperscript{22} Ibid page 31
\textsuperscript{23} Ibid e.g. SDG 6 pages 34-35, SDG 13 : worldwide effects page 48; Global Warming Severe Consequences for Africa by Dan Shepard Africa Renewal

Global warming: severe consequences for Africa | Africa Renewal

\textsuperscript{24} Ibid page 32
\textsuperscript{25} Ibid page 8 and page 32
\textsuperscript{26} Ibid page 32
more modest rate” than other regions. 27 30% of women aged 20-24 years were still married before the age of 18. 28

The report also observed that women and girls still performed a disproportionate share of unpaid care and domestic work. On average, women spent roughly triple the amount of time that men did each day in unpaid care and domestic work, according to the latest available data from around 90 countries. That work included a variety of unpaid activities, such as taking care of children and the elderly, and domestic chores. Data also suggested that the gender gap widened when women were most likely to have young children at home. Inadequate cookstoves, water, sanitation and transportation also increase women’s burdens, as did the lack of early childhood education and care, long-term care and access to social protection and services. That burden was compounded by traditional notions of women’s roles in society and by the effects of climate change and the water crisis. For example, when climate change or the water crisis affected the availability of water or the distance women or girls must travel to obtain this basic resource, women or girls had less time for paid work, education and leisure, further reinforcing their socioeconomic disadvantage. Moreover, the threat of violence, sexual assault, kidnapping or even being killed also would have obvious effects on a women or girl’s opportunities to pursue an education or any other area of development for that matter. 29

At home, at work and in political life, women were still too often denied decision-making power. For example, as of 1 January 2019, women’s representation in national parliaments ranged from 0 to 61.3 per cent, averaging 24.3 per cent. 30 In addition, women only comprised 39% of the workforce and 27% of the managerial positions in 2018. 31 Women often did not fare any better at home either as according to data from 51 countries, only 57 per cent of women 15 to 49 years old who were married or in a union made their own decisions about sexual relations and the use of contraceptives and reproductive health services. 32

While it was also recognized in the report that within the past 25 years, progress has been made in gender equality through the creation of new legislation and the reform of existing laws, it was also conceded that troublesome gaps remain. For example, nearly two thirds of those countries lacked laws that covered both direct and indirect discrimination against women. In the area of violence against women, legal gaps were found in over one quarter of the countries studied. Of those countries, 68 per cent lacked rape laws based on the principle of consent. In the areas of employment and economic benefits, and of marriage and family, 29 per cent and 24 per cent of countries, respectively, had legal gaps. For example, in more than half of the countries, no laws were in place to mandate equal pay for work of equal value. Moreover, less than one third of the

27 Ibid page 32
28 Ibid page 8
29 Ibid page 32
30 Ibid page 33
31 Ibid page 33
32 Ibid page 33
countries had laws stipulating 18 years as the minimum age of marriage for women and men, with no exceptions.\textsuperscript{33}

Although progress had also been made in mainstreaming gender budgeting in policy and legal requirements significant gaps remained. For example, many countries had not yet established a comprehensive system to track allocations for gender equality or to make data publicly available. The data also revealed a gap in policy implementation. Among the same set of countries, 90 per cent had policies and programmes in place to address gender gaps, but only 43 per cent reported adequate resource allocations to implement them.\textsuperscript{34}

The report acknowledged that achieving gender equality would continue to require bold and sustainable actions that addressed not only the structural impediments and root causes of discrimination against women but would also require laws and policies that advanced gender equality, were backed by adequate resources and had stronger accountability for commitments made to women’s rights.\textsuperscript{35}

**SDG 6**

The report recognized that fresh water is a precious resource that is essential to human health, food and energy security, poverty eradication and many other aspects of sustainable development. In addition, water-related ecosystems had always provided natural sites for human settlements, along with a wealth of ecosystem services. Yet, like other natural resources, water was under threat. The statistics presented a grim picture: the demand for water had outpaced population growth and half the world’s population was already experiencing severe water scarcity at least one month a year. Most rivers in Africa, Asia and Latin America were more polluted now than they were in the 1990s. An estimated 50 to 70 per cent of the world’s natural wetland area has been lost over the last 100 years. While substantial progress had been made in increasing access to clean drinking water and sanitation, billions of people—mostly in rural areas—still lacked these basic services. Moreover while donors increased their aid commitments to the water sector by 37 per cent between 2016 and 2017 and countries had recognized the importance of better coordinating the use of water resources and place integrated plans for their management, much more effort was needed to improve access to water and sanitation services, increase wastewater treatment, enhance water use efficiency, expand operational cooperation across transboundary water basins, and protect and restore freshwater ecosystems.\textsuperscript{36}

Despite progress, accelerated action was also needed to provide billions of people with safely managed drinking water and sanitation. For example, overall, 90 per cent of the world’s population had at least basic drinking water services yet, despite those gains, 785 million people still lacked even basic drinking water services in 2017. And while the proportion of the global population using safely managed sanitation services increased from 28 per cent in 2000 to 45 per cent in 2017 and an additional 30 per cent of the global population used basic sanitation services and an estimated 673

\textsuperscript{33} Ibid page 33

\textsuperscript{34} Ibid page 33

\textsuperscript{35} Ibid page 32

\textsuperscript{36} Ibid page 34
million people (9 per cent of the global population) still practiced open defecation in 2017, the majority of them in Southern Asia. Globally, an estimated 3 billion people, or 2 out of 5 people worldwide, were still unable to properly wash their hands at home. The lack of basic water, sanitation and hygiene services were also important issues regarding public areas where people congregated as in 2016, one third of all primary schools lacked basic drinking water, sanitation and hygiene services. Moreover, one out of four health-care facilities worldwide also lacked basic drinking water services, affecting over 2 billion people and increasing the infection risk of people seeking medical care. The lack of basic water, sanitation and hygiene services was also viewed as adversely affecting the education and health of millions of schoolchildren, particularly girls coping with menstruation. According to the report achieving universal access to even basic sanitation services by 2030 would require a doubling of the current annual rate of progress.

Water stress, which was reported to affect people on every continent, also required immediate and collective action. Two billion people lived in countries experiencing high water stress, and about 4 billion people experienced severe water scarcity at least one month a year. Countries with high levels of water stress were all located in Northern Africa and Western Asia and in Central and Southern Asia. One third of countries also had what was described as medium to high levels of water stress. Factors which contributed to this were described as global water use, which over the last century, had also increased at more than twice the rate of population growth. That growth, along with rapid urbanization, socioeconomic development and changing consumption patterns, continued to drive water demand, which was also heightened by climate change. The future did not offer much solace as it was estimated that, by 2030, an estimated 700 million people could be displaced by intense water scarcity. According to the report, in order to reduce pressure on freshwater resources, every country and region needed to increase the use of non-conventional water resources, such as the reuse of wastewater, desalinated water, and direct use of agricultural drainage water.

While Countries were advancing the integrated management of their water resources, more rapid progress was needed as 60 per cent of countries were not on track to reach the 2030 target of full implementation. There were problems even among the seventy per cent of countries who reported that they had procedures in place (defined in either policy or law) for community participation in the areas of rural drinking water supply and water resources management as implementation of those procedures was constrained due to the lack of human and financial resources.

SDG 7

According to the report the world was making progress towards Goal 7 as energy was becoming more sustainable and widely available. Nevertheless, more focused attention was needed to improve access to clean and safe cooking fuels and technologies for 3 billion people, to expand the use of renewable energy beyond the electricity sector, and to increase electrification in sub-Saharan Africa as three billion people still lacked clean cooking fuels and technologies, which posed a grave

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37 Ibid page 34
38 Ibid page 35
39 Ibid page 35
40 Ibid pages 36-37
threat to human health and the environment. The progress in this regard was considered to be far too slow to meet the SDG target as it not only left nearly 3 billion people dependent on inefficient and highly polluting cooking systems but also resulted in nearly 4 million premature deaths each year and remained a major contributor to poor health and environmental degradation in low- and middle-income countries.\textsuperscript{41}

**SDG 8**

States were still struggling to meet the objectives of Goal 8 so as to meet economic growth targets in least developed countries; increase employment opportunities, especially for young people; reduce inequalities across regions, age groups and genders; decrease informal employment; and promote safe and secure working environments for all workers.\textsuperscript{42} For example, the median hourly pay of men was still 12\% higher than that of women. The global unemployment rate was 5 \% as of 2018 with one fifth of young people not being education, employment or training.\textsuperscript{43}

The continuing pay gap between women and men continued to be a glaring reminder of gender inequality. An analysis of the latest available data for 62 countries found that men’s median hourly pay is 12 per cent higher than that of women. Furthermore, men had a wage advantage in every major occupational category in 49 countries with relevant data. The median gender pay gap exceeded 20 per cent in managerial and professional occupations, and among craft and related trade workers and plant machine operators and assemblers. The report viewed gender pay gaps as being rooted in rigid social norms and cultural expectations about women’s roles in society. When combined with differences in employment opportunities and lower access to social protection, they could result in long-term income gaps and compromise gender equality now and in the future.\textsuperscript{44}

While the global unemployment rate was steadily dropping it remained high in some regions and among youth. While the global unemployment rate had finally recovered from the global financial crisis of 2009. In 2018, it stood at 5 per cent—matching the pre-crisis level, large disparities still existed across regions and age groups. For example, in 2018, the unemployment rates in Northern Africa and Western Asia (9.9 per cent) and Latin America and the Caribbean (8.0 per cent) were over 2.5 times higher than those in Central and Southern Asia (3.2 per cent). Moreover, while gender disparities in unemployment rates were less than 1 per cent globally, they still existed at alarming rates in some regions, such as Western Asia and Northern Africa. In those regions, the unemployment rate for women was over 8 percentage points higher than for men in 2018; in Latin America and the Caribbean, the rate for women was almost 3 percentage points higher. What’s more, youth were three times more likely to be unemployed than adults. In 2018, the youth unemployment rate was 12 per cent compared to 4 per cent for adults.\textsuperscript{45}

\textsuperscript{41} Ibid page 36  
\textsuperscript{42} Ibid page 38  
\textsuperscript{43} Ibid page 11  
\textsuperscript{44} Ibid page 39  
\textsuperscript{45} Ibid page 21 and page 39
The talents and energy of one fifth of the world’s youth were also not being effectively harnessed as, in 2018, one fifth of the world’s youth were not engaged in either education, employment or training. The situation was most serious in Central and Southern Asia and in Northern African and Western Asia, where more than one quarter of youth fall into this category. Gender differences in this regard surfaced again and were described as being pervasive. In 2018, young women were more than twice as likely as young men to be unemployed or outside the labour force and not in school or in a training program. In Central and Southern Asia, 46 per cent of young women fell into this category compared to 10 per cent of young men.\(^{46}\)

Informal employment remains a major challenge to the goal of decent work for all and was viewed as remaining pervasive throughout the developing world. Based on the latest available data for 54 developing countries, in three quarters of countries, more than half of those with jobs in non-agricultural sectors were informally employed. Moreover, in about 70 per cent of countries, the share of informal employment in non-agricultural sectors was, once again, higher for women than for men. The report concluded that these findings warranted urgent attention from policymakers given the adverse impact of informal employment on earnings, social protection, occupational safety, health and working conditions generally. Informal employment was also viewed as being linked to higher poverty rates and was seen as a major challenge to the goal of decent work for all.\(^{47}\)

**SDG 9**

While almost everyone was viewed to now live within range of mobile-cellular networks, not all could afford to use them as fixed-broadband Internet connections remained out of reach for many people. The cost of accessing mobile cellular networks and mobile-broadband Internet remained too high for many, particularly the most disadvantaged and at-risk population groups. In fact, just over half of the world’s population was currently using the Internet, with rates much lower in LDCs (about 20 per cent).\(^{48}\)

**SDG 10**

Inequality within and among countries was still a persistent cause for concern, despite progress in some areas. Income inequality continued to rise in many parts of the world, even as the poorest 40 per cent of the population in most countries experienced income growth.\(^{49}\) For example in 69 countries, the poorest 40 per cent saw their income grow, but with large variations among countries. Moreover, the bottom 40 per cent still received less than 25 per cent of overall income as, many countries, an increasing share of income went to the top 1 per cent.\(^{50}\)
Globally, the share of national output used to remunerate workers was also declining.

The share of national income that goes to labour was one indication of whether economic growth would translate into higher incomes for workers over time as increased national income could lead to improved living standards.\textsuperscript{51}

Policies to facilitate orderly, safe, regular and responsible migration were widespread in their application, but more work needed to be done as they were still far from universal. Out of 105 countries which were surveyed, 76% had policies on safe, orderly and regular migration, 54% had policies on migrant’s rights and 57% had policies on migrants’ socioeconomic well-being.\textsuperscript{52}

**SDG 11**

The world is becoming increasingly urbanized. Since 2007, more than half the world’s population has been living in cities, and that share is projected to rise to 60 per cent by 2030. While cities and metropolitan areas are considered to be powerhouses of economic growth—contributing about 60 per cent of global GDP—they also account for about 70 per cent of global carbon emissions and over 60 per cent of resource use. Rapid urbanization is resulting in a growing number of slum dwellers, inadequate and overburdened infrastructure and services (such as waste collection and water and sanitation systems, roads and transport), worsening air pollution and unplanned urban sprawl.\textsuperscript{53}

Rapid urbanization and population growth are outpacing the construction of adequate and affordable housing. The result? The proportion of the urban population living in slums worldwide has grown to 23.5 per cent in 2018. The absolute number of people living in slums or informal settlements has grown to over 1 billion, with 80 per cent attributed to three regions: Eastern and South-Eastern Asia (370 million), sub-Saharan Africa (238 million) and Central and Southern Asia (227 million). An estimated 3 billion people will require adequate and affordable housing by 2030.\textsuperscript{54}

Access to public transport is increasing, but faster progress is needed in developing regions. Public transport was seen as an essential service for urban residents as well as a catalyst for economic growth and social inclusion. Moreover, with ever-increasing numbers of people moving to urban areas, the use of public transport was viewed as being a service which would help to mitigate air pollution and climate change. However, according to 2018 data from 227 cities, in 78 countries, only 53 per cent of urban residents had convenient access to public transport. Stronger efforts were viewed to be needed in order to ensure that sustainable transport is available to all, particularly to vulnerable populations such as women, children, seniors and persons with disabilities.\textsuperscript{55}

Globally, 2 billion people were without waste collection services, and 3 billion people lacked access to controlled waste disposal facilities, according to data collected between 2010 and 2018. The

\textsuperscript{51} Ibid page 43

\textsuperscript{52} Ibid page 13 and 43

\textsuperscript{53} Ibid page 44

\textsuperscript{54} Ibid page 14 and 44

\textsuperscript{55} Ibid page 14 and 44
problem was viewed to only worsen as urbanization increased, income levels rose and economies became more consumer-oriented. Moreover, while the proportion of municipal solid waste collected regularly increased from 76 per cent between 2001 and 2010 to 81 per cent between 2010 and 2018, it did not mean that that it was disposed of properly. According to the report, many municipal solid waste disposal facilities in low- and middle-income countries were open dumpsites, which contributed to air, water and soil pollution, including by plastic waste, as well as emissions of greenhouse gases such as methane. Investment in waste management infrastructure was viewed to be urgently needed to improve the handling of solid waste across much of the world.56

In too many cities, air pollution has become an unavoidable health hazard as nine out of ten urban residents in 2016 were breathing polluted air.57 Ambient air pollution from traffic, industry, power generation, waste burning and residential fuel combustion, combined with household air pollution was viewed to pose a major threat to both human health and efforts to curb climate change. Moreover, the health hazards of air pollution also had a greater impact on low and middle-income countries as more than 90 per cent of air-pollution-related deaths occurred in those areas, mainly in Asia and Africa.58

While open public spaces made cities more inclusive, many residents were not within easy walking distance of them. A connective matrix of streets and public spaces was viewed to create a skeleton of the city upon which everything else rests. Where public space was inadequate, poorly designed or privatized, the city became increasingly segregated. When investment in networks of streets and open public spaces were made, it was viewed to improve urban productivity, livelihoods and access to markets, jobs and public services, especially in countries where over half of the urban workforce was informal. However, based on 2018 data from 220 cities, in 77 countries, few cities had been able to implement a system of open public spaces that covers entire urban areas—that is, was within easy reach of all residents.59

**SDG 12**

Economic and social progress and growth over the last century has been accompanied by environmental degradation that is endangering the very systems on which our future development—indeed, our very survival—depends. Globally, we continue to use ever-increasing amounts of natural resources to support our economic activity. The efficiency with which such resources are used remains unchanged at the global level, as such the world has not yet seen a decoupling of economic growth and natural resource use. Urgent action was viewed as being needed to ensure that current material needs did not lead to over-extraction of resources and further degradation of the environment. Policies had to be embraced to improve resource efficiency, reduce waste and mainstream sustainability practices across all sectors of the economy.60

56 Ibid page 45
57 Ibid page 45
58 Ibid page 45
59 Ibid page 45
60 Ibid pages 46
Shrinking the global material footprint was seen as a global imperative. However, the lifestyles of people in the richest nations would have to change as they were heavily dependent on resources extracted from poorer countries and their material footprint was 60% higher than upper-middle income countries and 13 times the level of low-income countries.

While the transition towards sustainable and resilient societies will ultimately depend on the responsible management of the planet’s finite natural resources. Well-designed national policy frameworks and instruments were viewed to be necessary to enable the fundamental shift towards sustainable consumption and production patterns. Moreover, a pilot study of 262 reported policies and instruments revealed that, while the potential economic benefits of sustainable consumption and production processes were well recognized, social benefits had to be addressed. The study determined that social benefits were rarely included in policy objectives or measured. For instance, 63 per cent of the reported policies and instruments examined their impact on air, soil and water pollution, 45 per cent on waste reduction and 43 per cent on greenhouse gas emissions. Only 11 per cent considered their impact on health, and 7 per cent looked at their impact on gender. Demonstrating the benefits of such policies to all the SDGs was viewed to be essential to understanding the overall contribution of sustainable consumption and production to sustainable development, and to building the coalition needed to support a transformative shift.

**SDG 13**

As greenhouse gas levels continue to climb, climate change is occurring much faster than anticipated, and its effects are evident worldwide. The global mean temperature for 2018 was approximately 1°C above the pre-industrial baseline, and the last four years have been the warmest on record. Sea levels continue to rise at an accelerating rate.

In the report, climate change was observed to be the defining issue of our time and the greatest challenge to sustainable development. Its compounding effects are speeding up its advance and leaving very little time to act if the world wants to prevent runaway climate change. Limiting global warming to 1.5°C is necessary to avoid catastrophic consequences and irreversible changes. That will require rapid and far-reaching transitions in energy, land and urban infrastructure and industrial systems.

For example, unprecedented changes in all aspects of society will be required to avoid the worst effects of climate change. To limit global warming to 1.5°C means that emissions will need to peak as soon as possible, followed by rapid reductions. Global carbon emissions need to fall by a staggering

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61 Ibid page 46
62 Ibid page 15 and 46-47
63 Ibid page 47
64 Ibid page 47
65 Ibid page 16 and pages 47-48
66 Ibid page 48
45 per cent by 2030 from 2010 levels and continue at a steep decline to achieve net zero emissions by 2050.67

Countries must develop disaster risk reduction strategies in the face of growing climate threats. As described in Goal 1, climate change is already exacerbating disaster risks and poverty. From 1998 to 2017, climate-related disasters around the world accounted for 77 per cent of the nearly $3 trillion in direct economic losses from disasters. Over that period, climate related and geophysical disasters claimed an estimated 1.3 million lives.68

While countries have taken positive steps by preparing nationally determined contributions (NDCs) and increasing financing to combat climate change, far more ambitious plans and unprecedented changes in all aspects of society are required. For example despite an increase in climate finance flows of 17% between 2015 and 2016, investment in fossil fuels continue to be higher than investments in climate activities ($781 billion vs 681 billion in 2016).69 Access to finance and the strengthening of resilience and adaptive capacity need to be scaled up at a much faster pace, particularly among LDCs and small island developing States.70

SDG 14

Life depends on oceans. They make up the planet’s largest ecosystem—covering more than two thirds of the Earth’s surface—and provide billions of people with food and livelihoods. Oceans produce about half the oxygen we breathe, and act as a climate regulator, absorbing atmospheric heat and more than one quarter of man-made CO2. However, decades of increasing carbon emissions have led to a build-up of heat in the oceans and changes in their chemical composition. Increasing acidification is threatening marine life and hampering the ocean’s role in moderating climate change as it has increased by 26 per cent in acidity from pre-industrial times. At the current rate of CO2 emissions, an increase in acidity of 100 to 150 per cent by the end of this century is predicted.71 The resulting adverse effects of ocean acidification, climate change (including sea-level rise), extreme weather events and coastal erosion exacerbate ongoing threats to marine and coastal resources from overfishing, pollution and habitat degradation. Protected areas and policies and treaties that encourage responsible extraction of ocean resources are critical to confronting these threats.72

Coastal areas worldwide are also affected by land-based pollutants, including sewage and nutrient runoff, leading to coastal eutrophication, degraded water quality and the impairment of coastal marine ecosystems. Analysis of the clean water indicator, a measurement of the degree of ocean pollution, shows that water quality challenges are
widespread, but are most acute in some equatorial zones, especially in parts of Asia, Africa and Central America. Nearly all countries have room to improve their coastal water quality. Such improvements require policy commitments at the country level to expand access to wastewater treatment and to reduce chemical and nutrient runoff from agricultural sources, along with global commitments to reduce plastic debris.\textsuperscript{73}

Another issue \textsuperscript{2} SDG 14 specifically affects women. Almost all countries have small-scale fisheries, and they account for more than half of total production in developing countries, both in terms of quantity and value. Approximately 120 million workers worldwide—97 per cent of whom live in developing countries—depend directly on the value chains of commercial capture fisheries for their livelihoods. Women constitute nearly half of that workforce. Yet despite their critical contributions to nutrition, food security and local livelihoods, many small-scale fishing communities continue to be marginalized.\textsuperscript{74}

SDG 15

There has been progress however human activity continues to erode the health of ecosystems on which all species depend. The loss of forests is slowing but continues at an alarming rate; one million plant and animal species are at risk of extinction according to a recent United Nations report. The loss of global biodiversity is accelerating, moving us closer towards unknown and irreversible changes to the Earth’s ecosystems. According to the Red List Index, which tracks data on more than 20,000 species of mammals, birds, amphibians, corals and cycads, the risk of species extinction has worsened by about 10 per cent over the last 25 years. Further, the latest report of the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services noted that biodiversity is declining faster than at any other time in human history.\textsuperscript{75}

The severity of the situation requires immediate action and a fundamental transformation of our relationship with the Earth to halt biodiversity loss and protect ecosystems for the benefit of all.\textsuperscript{76}

Land degradation is also affecting one fifth of the Earth’s land area and the lives of one billion people. Twenty per cent of the Earth’s total land area was degraded between 2000 and 2015, resulting in a significant loss of services essential to human well-being. In all regions, except Europe and Northern America and Northern Africa and Western Asia, the extent of degradation covered 22.4 per cent to 35.5 per cent of land area, directly impacting the lives of over one billion people.\textsuperscript{77}

Global trends in land cover indicate a net loss in natural and semi-natural classes of land due largely to human-induced processes, including desertification, deforestation, improper soil management, cropland expansion and urbanization..\textsuperscript{78}

\textsuperscript{73} Ibid page 50
\textsuperscript{74} Ibid page 51
\textsuperscript{75} Ibid page 18 and page 52
\textsuperscript{76} Ibid page 52
\textsuperscript{77} Ibid page 52
\textsuperscript{78} Ibid page 52
Progress in protection of key biodiversity areas must accelerate to meet the 2030 target.

Protecting sites that are important for terrestrial, freshwater and mountain biodiversity—KBAs—is vital to ensuring the long-term and sustainable use of natural resources. While progress has been made since 2000 in protecting KBAs, the rate of progress has slowed significantly since 2010. The global mean percentage of each terrestrial, freshwater and mountain KBA covered by protected areas increased by more than 10 percentage points between 2000 and 2010. However, from 2010 to 2018, the coverage only increased by two to three percentage points. At the current rate, by 2030, less than 50 per cent of each KBA will be covered by protected areas at the global level, on average.

Mountain ecosystems provide essential environmental services, but their health varies widely among regions. Healthy mountain ecosystems are fundamental to the provision of ecosystem services to upland communities as well as lowland peoples living far from mountain peaks. For example, mountains are the source of 60 to 80 per cent of the world’s freshwater, which is used for domestic, agricultural and industrial consumption, green energy production and biodiversity conservation. Green coverage of mountain areas (by forests, grasslands/shrublands and croplands) is positively correlated to mountains’ state of health and, consequently, to their capacity to fulfill their ecosystem roles. A global baseline of mountain area green coverage has now been established using 2017 data. That year, 76 per cent of mountain areas globally were covered with vegetation: in Oceania, almost all mountain areas were covered, while in Northern Africa and Western Asia, the share was only 60 per cent.

Forest area is still declining, but at a slower rate. Between 2000 and 2015, forest area as a share of total land area decreased from 31.1 to 30.7 per cent. That represents the loss of more than 58 million hectares of forests, an area roughly the size of Kenya. Most of that loss occurred in the tropics, with the most sizable declines found in Latin America and sub-Saharan Africa. Conversion of forest land for agricultural use, such as growing crops and raising livestock, is considered a key driver in forest loss.

SDG 16

Realizing the goal of peaceful, just and inclusive societies is still a long way off. In recent years, no substantial advances have been made towards ending violence, promoting the rule of law, strengthening institutions at all levels, or increasing access to justice. Millions of people have been deprived of their security, rights and opportunities, while attacks on human rights activists and journalists are holding back development. More countries are ramping up efforts to uncover human rights abuses and designing laws and regulations
that foster more open and just societies. But much more work is needed to ensure that these mechanisms are implemented properly.\textsuperscript{84}

Conflict and other forms of violence are an affront to sustainable development. In 2018, the number of people fleeing war, persecution and conflict exceeded 70 million, the highest level that the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees has seen in almost 70 years. All are particularly vulnerable to various forms of abuse, including trafficking, violence and non-inclusive decision-making. Ensuring that they receive adequate protection is paramount to achieving the goal of inclusive societies and sustainable development.\textsuperscript{85}

In addition, while 80\% of men made up around 80\% of the overall homicide victims women constituted 64\% of homicide victims with involve a intimate partner or a family-related homicide.\textsuperscript{86} For intimate partner homicides only, the share of female victims was even higher at 82 per cent. Young men 15 to 29 years old faced the highest homicide risk overall with some regional variations.\textsuperscript{87}

In recent years, a growing number of trafficking victims have been detected in countries around the world: from an average of 150 detected victims per country in 2010 to 254 in 2016. However, contrary to findings from earlier years, most trafficking victims are also now detected domestically.\textsuperscript{88} 70\% of detected victims human trafficking were women and girls most of whom were trafficked for sexual exploitation.\textsuperscript{89} Victim profiles were different depending on the form of exploitation. While 83 per cent of the female victims in 2016 were trafficked for sexual exploitation, 82 per cent of the males were trafficked for forced labour.\textsuperscript{90}

Murder rates among human rights defenders, journalists and trade unionists were also rising. From 1 January to 31 October 2018, the United Nations recorded and verified 397 killings of human rights defenders, journalists and trade unionists in 41 countries. Journalists and bloggers constituted one quarter (91) of the total number of victims killed, and most of these murders occurred outside of countries experiencing conflict. These total amount of these murder rates amounted to an average of nine people being murdered on the front lines of efforts to build more inclusive and equal societies—a disturbing increase from the average of one victim per day from 2015 to 2017.\textsuperscript{91}

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{84} Ibid page 54
\item \textsuperscript{85} Ibid page 54
\item \textsuperscript{86} Ibid page 19 and page 54
\item \textsuperscript{87} Ibid page 54
\item \textsuperscript{88} Ibid page 54
\item \textsuperscript{89} Ibid page 54
\item \textsuperscript{90} Ibid page 19
\item \textsuperscript{91} Ibid page 19 and 55
\end{itemize}
One in two victims had been working with communities on issues involving land, the environment, poverty, the rights of minorities and indigenous peoples, or the impact of business activities. And, overall, every tenth victim was a woman. 92

The report observed that, unless Member States lived up to their international obligation to protect those who stand up for the fundamental rights and freedoms of others, human rights defenders, journalists and trade unionists will continue to be targets of assassination in countries around the world. 93

While birth registration was considered to be a human right only three quarters (73 per cent) of children under 5 years of age worldwide have had their births registered, according to data from 161 countries over the period 2010 to 2018. In sub-Saharan Africa, fewer than half (46 per cent) of all children under 5 years of age are registered. Central and Southern Asia and South-Eastern Asia also lag behind at 68 per cent and 82 per cent, respectively. Much work has been done recently to improve civil registration systems and to raise awareness among citizens, but continued efforts are needed to ensure that all children can claim their right to an identity.94

More countries are establishing legal and institutional frameworks for the defense of human rights, but the pace of progress is slow.95 The pace of progress in establishing national human rights institutions (NHRIs) that are in compliance with the principles relating to the status of national institutions (the Paris Principles) must be accelerated as in 2018, only 39 per cent of all countries had successfully achieved compliance. If growth continues at the same rate, by 2030 only around half of all countries will have compliant NHRIs to ensure that States deliver on their human rights obligations.96

SDG 17

Support for implementing the SDGs is gaining momentum, but major challenges remain. A growing share of the global population has access to the Internet, and a Technology Bank for LDCs has been established, yet the digital divide persists. Personal remittances are at an all-time high, but ODA is declining, and private investment flows are often out of sync with sustainable development. Moreover, global growth has slowed due to ongoing trade tensions, and some governments have retreated from multilateral action. With the stakes so high, strong international cooperation is needed now more than ever to ensure that countries have the means to achieve the SDGs.97

Despite pledges to boost development financing, aid levels are falling Net ODA totaled $149 billion in 2018, down by 2.7 per cent in real terms from 2017.98 Moreover, in 2018, less aid went to LDCs

92 Ibid page 55
93 Ibid page 55
94 Ibid page 55
95 Ibid page 55
96 Ibid page 55
97 Ibid page 20 and page 56-57
98 Ibid page 56
and African countries, where it was needed most. Preliminary figures indicated that bilateral ODA to LDCs fell by 3 per cent in real terms from 2017, and aid to Africa fell by 4 per cent. Donor countries were not living up to their pledge to ramp up development finance, tamping down efforts to achieve global Goals.  

Benefits of remittances from international migrant workers were still reduced by the high cost of transferring money. In the first quarter of 2019, the average cost of sending $200 was still high, at around 7 per cent. That is more than double the SDG target of 3 per cent by 2030. The cost of money transfers was highest across many African corridors and small islands in the Pacific, at about 10 per cent.  

Access to broadband networks is believed to have a significant impact on global economic output. An increase of 1 per cent in fixed broadband penetration—the number of subscriptions per 100 inhabitants—is associated with a rise of 0.08 per cent in global GDP, on average. The impact is higher in developed countries than in developing countries. Globally, growth in fixed broadband subscriptions has been sustained, with the penetration rate rising from 3.4 per 100 inhabitants in 2005 to 14.1 in 2018.  

Financial support for statistics has increased, but is still not sufficient to meet demand created by the SDGs. The demand for high-quality, timely and accessible data for development planning is increasing. To meet that demand, countries need to establish a strong national statistical plan that has sufficient funding and political backing to improve statistical capacity across the national statistical system. In 2018, 129 countries worldwide had implemented a national statistical plan, up from 102 in 2017. However, many countries lacked the necessary funding to do so. In sub-Saharan Africa, only 23 per cent of plans were fully funded, compared to 94 per cent in Europe and Northern America. In 2016, countries received support valued at $623 million from multilateral and bilateral donors for all areas of statistics, up from $591 million in 2015. Such support increased by almost $400 million from 2006 to 2016, yet was still insufficient to satisfy data and statistical demands created by the SDGs. To meet statistical capacity building objectives by 2030, current commitments to statistics—0.33 per cent of total ODA—needs to double.