

# Fulfilling the goals

## *Realising the SDGs will require action in five key areas*

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In this third year of global efforts to implement the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, there are encouraging signs of momentum. The hope that accompanied the Agenda's adoption in 2015 is still with us. The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) have captured the imagination of leaders and general public alike. Member States are showing strong ownership – including through personal engagement by heads of state and government – and are aligning their plans and strategies accordingly.

We are seeing new champions stepping up, seeking to set the world on a path towards a more inclusive globalisation. Local authorities and responsible businesses are seizing the opportunities of climate action. Young people are taking on more and more responsibilities in the sustainability movement. The scientific and academic communities are contributing solutions and ideas.

At the same time, we know the clock is ticking, and the pace of progress is insufficient to fully meet our ambition. The global context is one in which we are still suffering from many protracted conflicts, with new ones arising, along with complex humanitarian crises and mass movements of refugees and displaced persons.

Inequality remains alarmingly high, including between women and men, where disparities have grown wider in many key respects. The impacts of climate change are spreading, and environmental degradation and pollution are worsening, threatening our long-term sustainability. Taken together, these obstacles risk throwing us off course in our efforts to meet the targets by the deadline of 2030.

### **Five imperatives**

The SDGs are a beacon of hope for people around the world – an agreed set of priorities for the global common good. Looking ahead, it is clear that realising this transformative vision will require concerted action and changes in five key areas.

First, to achieve the SDGs, we must be guided by the principle of leaving no one behind. This commitment to inclusiveness and equality is at the heart of the 2030 Agenda. It is also our best long-term strategy to prevent conflict and maintain peace and security. Marginalisation and discrimination can lead to social fissures and political unrest. Fair distribution of wealth and special attention to the

and exclusion, and their voices are yet to be sufficiently included in the deliberations affecting their lives and futures. Those furthest behind must be our top priority.

Second, we must shift to sustainable consumption and production patterns. According to NASA, 2017 was likely the second warmest year on record, behind only 2016. Last year also ties with 2011 for the highest number of billion-dollar disasters in a single year.

Climate change is an undeniable threat. There is no doubt that we must raise our ambition in implementing the Paris Agreement and putting the world on a safe trajectory of keeping global temperature increase below 2°C. UN

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vulnerable, on the other hand, contribute to social cohesion and political stability. We must strive to end poverty in its multi-dimensional reality, and ensure access to quality basic services and human rights for all.

We must also unleash the potential of half our populations, by ensuring women's full equality and protection from violence. We know that through women's meaningful participation in all aspects of life, we can increase food security, better address climate change, see greater resources flow to social protection, unlock trillions for the global economy and ensure more sustainable peace and security.

Young people, for their part, continue to face alarmingly high rates of unemployment

Secretary-General António Guterres has decided to convene a climate summit in 2019 to accelerate momentum.

We must also invest in science and technology to find more effective solutions to decouple growth from emissions and environmental degradation; develop incentives to guide the practices of businesses and communities, especially young people; and address the tensions between needs and wants in a world of 7.5 billion people.

Third, we must learn to think in an integrated way and work collaboratively with all sectors. The SDGs are interconnected. They are a network of interdependent, indivisible, mutually reinforcing targets – the DNA of our



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▲ Deputy Secretary-General Amina J. Mohammed visits a rehabilitation centre for disabled children in Belarus

sustainable development agenda. In taking these interactions into account, we must strengthen collaboration among all relevant sectors and partners when making plans and strategies, allocating budgets or evaluating performance. Cohesive, joined-up decision-making is a must for the SDG era.

Fourth, we must mobilise resources through all possible channels – public and private, domestic and international. Official development assistance is an important commitment and still plays an indispensable role, but increasingly it is complemented by innovative forms of resource mobilisation, as well as South-South cooperation.

The financing requirements for realising the SDGs and the Paris Agreement are considerable. The Addis Ababa Action Agenda provides the framework

and blueprint for global cooperation. Development banks have significant potential to scale up their contributions. But public finance alone is not sufficient. Financial systems will need to become more responsive and innovative, and aligned with the 2030 Agenda. Digital finance will play a major role in connecting the world.

Fifth, we must adapt our institutions to meet the greater demands of a new paradigm in international development. The interconnected nature of the agenda, and its ambition to take care of those who are furthest behind, require us to go beyond institutional barriers and intellectual silos. Many countries have established inter-ministerial coordination mechanisms within the government, as well as various channels for meaningful engagement with stakeholders.

The UN development system must also adapt. Guided by the 2030 Agenda, Secretary-General Guterres has set out a vision for transformation. This encompasses strengthening UN country teams and the Resident Coordinator system, and sharpening critical capacities.

Our aim is to build a UN system that is accountable, results-driven, responsive and cohesive in supporting Member States as they take the lead in building a better future for their citizens.

With concerted action across these five imperatives, we can move the SDGs from promise to practice. The United Nations looks forward to working with all partners to enable all humankind to enjoy a future of peace and prosperity on a healthy planet. ●