



# HIGH-LEVEL POLITICAL FORUM ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

#HLPF #SDGs #GlobalGoals [sustainabledevelopment.un.org/hlpf/2020](https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/hlpf/2020)

## PRESS RELEASE

### **Amidst COVID-19 pandemic, UN High-Level Forum aims to chart pathways toward a sustainable recovery**

**New York, 3 July**—Facing the devastating impacts of COVID-19, which is threatening decades of progress in improving people’s lives, countries are meeting at the United Nations High-Level Political Forum (HLPF) on Sustainable Development from 7 to 16 July to chart the best paths forward to a healthier, more equitable world.

The virtual ten-day Forum convened by the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) takes place as the global death toll from COVID-19 has passed 500,000, and more than ten million cases have been confirmed. Economies have collapsed, unemployment is skyrocketing, and health care systems are buckling under the increased strain of the virus.

Bringing together over 1000 participants, including around 100 members of governments as well as business, finance and civil society representatives, the largest annual UN gathering to review progress on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) will explore solutions—both domestic and multilateral—for responding to the crisis and for building a solid foundation for a sustainable recovery.

#### **The need to build back better**

Under the theme *“Accelerated action and transformative pathways: realizing the decade of action and delivery for sustainable development,”* the Forum will look at how the world can effectively respond to the pandemic and build back better by scaling up efforts to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals, the blueprint adopted by world leaders in 2015 for a more equitable and sustainable world.

Immediately prior to the Forum, on 6 July, ECOSOC will bring together the Council’s expert bodies and the UN System to analyze the impact of COVID-19 on the SDGs and pathways forward to recover fairer and better. And following the Forum, on 17 July, a high-level conversation will take place on global solidarity and renewed multilateralism during times of crisis, a substantive contribution of ECOSOC to the 75th Anniversary Commemoration of the United Nations.



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“Had we been further advanced in meeting the Sustainable Development Goals and the Paris Agreement on Climate Change, we could better face this challenge - with stronger health systems, fewer people living in extreme poverty, less gender inequality, a healthier natural environment, and more resilient societies,” stated UN Secretary-General António Guterres.

“The COVID-19 pandemic is a wake-up call for us to strengthen international collaboration,” said Ambassador Mona Juul, President of ECOSOC. “We can only succeed through a coordinated multilateral response, strong political leadership, and global solidarity with those most vulnerable.”

## 47 country reviews

The Forum will review the current situation and examine what has been working, and where obstacles are preventing progress on the Goals. The first week of the Forum will be devoted to discussing thematic action and policy solutions that can help countries contend with the crisis and recover better. The Forum is expected to culminate in the adoption of a ministerial declaration.

This year, 47 countries – 26 of them for the first time – are presenting their Voluntary National Reviews – the work they are doing on the Sustainable Development Goals – with an aim of sharing experiences with the global community and accelerating implementation efforts. The submissions by the 47 countries can be found here:

<https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/hlpf/2020#vnrs>.

For example, Morocco, by investing in renewable energy, now has 34% of its electrical capacity coming from renewable sources. Finland has been successful in strengthening the rights of women and girls and advancing the rights of persons with disabilities. Since 2018, the education sector in Liberia has had better access to the internet along with free education in all public schools and universities. Nepal has increased women’s representation in the local-level governments to about 41%, and Panama continues to drive poverty eradication efforts through the “Hive Strategy: Panama free of poverty and inequality, the Sixth Frontier” whose mission is to promote social justice, equity and opportunity.

## Action on the Sustainable Development Goals

While countries have taken temporary measures to mitigate the impact of COVID-19 through stimulus packages, tax cuts and expansion of social protection measures, these will not be



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sufficient in the long term. Building back better requires a systemic shift toward a more sustainable economy that works for people and the planet.

Leveraging this moment of crisis, when usual policies and social norms have been disrupted, bold steps can steer the world back on track towards the Sustainable Development Goals.

Among the countries that have recently launched their SDG acceleration actions in support of the Sustainable Development Goals are Mexico, whose social protection programme aims to cover 2.5 million more women; the UK with its 515 million pound education package for marginalized girls in Africa; Afghanistan and its enhanced legal aid programme to provide quality criminal defense services to the poor; and India with a plan to install 175 gigawatts of renewable energy capacity by the year 2022.

Civil society and private sector actions include a student-led initiative by the State University of Haiti aiming to establish community pharmacies in Port-au-Prince; the Kadiwaku Family Foundation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo that promotes inclusive entrepreneurship for persons with disabilities and has trained 650 youth with disabilities; and the 'Business Ambition for 1.5 °C: Our Only Future' initiative joined by close to 250 companies from around the world. For a full list of the more than 150 SDG acceleration actions registered so far, see <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/sdgactions>.

## Special events on transformative solutions

New actions are expected to be announced at the Forum, which will help support efforts to build back better from COVID-19 and deliver on the SDGs. The **SDG Acceleration Actions to Build Back Better** event (14 July) is one of several virtual events taking place at the Forum that aim to showcase transformative solutions for re-building better societies. Other events include **the Chief Sustainability Officers for SDGs** (14 July), **the SDG Learning, Training and Practice Capacity Building Workshops** (7 to 13 July), **the launch of the Sustainable Development Goals Report 2020** (7 July), **the SDG-6 Global Acceleration Framework Launch** (9 July), **the Local and Regional Governments Forum on the 2030 Agenda** (13 July), and **the Launch of the State of the Food Security and Nutrition in the World 2020 Report** (13 July).

In addition, 204 virtual side events and an online exhibit, featuring Member States, the UN system and civil society will take place during the HLPF. At the same time, 17 VNR Labs will provide an informal platform for experience sharing and reflection on the Voluntary National Review process.



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And a virtual SDG Media Zone will bring together influencers, experts on the SDGs and other personalities to further amplify the important topics discussed at the Forum.

## About the High-Level Political Forum

The High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development is the central global forum for providing political leadership, guidance and recommendations on implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the 17 SDGs, which were unanimously adopted by world leaders in September 2015. The Forum provides an opportunity for countries, civil society and businesses to highlight the efforts they are taking to achieve the SDGs, exchange ideas and best practices.

More information on the Forum: <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/hlpf/2020>

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