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**Accelerating the recovery from the coronavirus disease
(COVID-19) and the full implementation of the 2030 Agenda
for Sustainable Development at all levels**

Discussion papers on the theme of the high-level political forum on sustainable development, submitted by major groups and other stakeholders**

Note by the Secretariat

The present document is a compilation of the executive summaries of the position papers on the theme of the 2023 high-level political forum on sustainable development, "Accelerating the recovery from the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) and the full implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development at all levels", submitted by the various major groups and other relevant stakeholders that have autonomously established and maintained effective coordination mechanisms for participation in the high-level political forum, in accordance with General Assembly resolution 67/290. The full reports are posted on the website of the forum: hlpf.un.org/2023.

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* E/HLPF/2023/1.

** The present document is a compilation of the executive summaries of the thematic papers submitted to the high-level political forum on sustainable development by the major groups and other stakeholders and does not necessarily reflect the views of the United Nations.

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I. Women

1. Since the women major group gathered in 2022, feminists and supporters of other movements have been protesting online and in the halls of power, demanding accountability for rising inequalities and calling for urgent action on human rights, gender equality, social justice, peace and the full implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. At this pivotal political moment, halfway through the 2030 Agenda, the women's major group stands in solidarity with these tireless movements and remains committed to amplifying their visions, demands and action.

2. Now is the time to focus on immediate action for the full achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals instead of rushing to create new frameworks that override existing agreements. Failure to achieve the Goals – let alone failure to make significant progress towards achieving them – would be catastrophic for humankind and the planet.

3. To avoid such a catastrophe, the women's major group demands that Governments match the political determination and persistence that feminists in all their diversity demonstrate every day. Their resilience comes in the face of existential threats from underfunding, trivialization, anti-gender attacks and intimidation, criminalization and violence. Their resistance is against the increasing attacks on women's personhood and bodily autonomy, the double burden of care that women carry, the inaccessibility of women's rights as a result of austerity and privatization, and the appropriation and degradation of natural resources.

4. The women's major group calls upon Governments to take the steps necessary to implement this critical, interlinked agenda as a matter of the utmost urgency. The group stresses that such action must be accompanied by strong accountability mechanisms in order to address the multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination that the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic exacerbated and to strengthen the faltering progress being made and then accelerate it towards the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals.

5. The women's major group insists upon the critical importance of both policy coherence in the effective achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals and a cross-cutting approach to prioritizing the reaching of gender equality in the achievement of all the Goals. Too often the women's major group sees Governments disregard global agreements, including the Goals, when group members attempt to bring the agreements back to their countries.

6. The women's major group calls upon Governments to reclaim leadership from the private sector and other actors that encourage them to outsource, weaken or abandon their human rights obligations.

7. The women's major group reminds Governments that an independent and fully funded civil society is a prerequisite for the development of policies that will enable women to live in dignity and equality.

8. The task ahead to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals sometimes feels daunting. The interlinked systems of oppression, which created the inequalities that the 2030 Agenda should remedy, continue to be upheld by action and policies that centralize power and wealth, and uphold and strengthen the patriarchal, racist and colonial status quo.

9. Nevertheless, members of the women's major group lead action every day to dismantle these systems. The women's major group will never give up on its constituents; on gender equality and the human rights of women, girls and gender-diverse people, the planet or this agenda. The women's major group demands that

Governments demonstrate that same commitment and determination. This is the only way to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals.

II. Non-governmental organizations

10. The year 2023 marks the halfway point of the 2030 Agenda. This broad multilateral commitment reflects a laudable attempt to change the paradigm of financing and governance to achieve prosperity, peace, a sustainable world and the well-being of people, other living species and the environment.

11. A move towards inclusive and equitable policies would rectify historical wrongs that have placed humans, animals and Mother Earth at risk. However, the world is not on track to implement the 2030 Agenda as a result of failures to address structural injustices and hesitancy by many Governments to take ambitious and transformative action.

12. The Secretary-General has repeatedly called attention to the mutually reinforcing crises pushing the Sustainable Development Goals out of reach. The rise of undemocratic Governments opposing human rights, including sexual and reproductive rights, and the oppression of investigative journalism, civil society, Indigenous Peoples, and human and environmental rights defenders have undermined the basic objectives of the Goals. The triple planetary crisis of climate change, pollution and biodiversity loss, in conjunction with rapid unplanned urbanization, threatens the well-being of current and future generations.

13. Besides insufficient efforts to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals, the 2030 Agenda must contend with an ongoing pandemic prolonged by vaccine inequality; the potential for future pandemics exacerbated by ecological overshoot and a failure to manage the relationship between humans, animals and nature; the crisis of yet another war threatening global efforts towards peace; and growing economic inequality around the globe.

14. In this context, the non-governmental organizations major group calls for the following:

(a) Sustainable Development Goal 6: A focus on drivers of water scarcity, accessibility and pollution, with attention given to finance, technology, equitable water rights, nature-based solutions, waste treatment, community leadership, women's participation and Indigenous knowledge;

(b) Sustainable Development Goal 7: A just and inclusive transition to affordable, clean and nature-sensitive renewable energy, with financing to deploy green energy technologies globally, including to lower-middle-income countries;

(c) Sustainable Development Goal 9: Green jobs, resilient infrastructure and inclusive, sustainable and accountable industrialization, with special attention given to vulnerable populations;

(d) Sustainable Development Goal 11: Urban, social and environmental determinants of well-being, including safe, adequate, affordable and sustainable food, housing, water and energy services; health services; and transportation;

(e) Sustainable Development Goal 17: Commitment to achieving truly inclusive partnerships with non-governmental organizations and cross-sectoral collaboration that eliminate silos and move towards systematic solutions.

15. Looking towards the Sustainable Development Goals Summit in September, the non-governmental organizations major group further calls for:

(a)   A six-year road map to Sustainable Development Goal achievement by 2030, including milestones and a schedule of deliverables that ensure concrete commitments and financing;

(b)   An action plan to move beyond the use of gross domestic product to measure progress made and transform economic systems to serve the well-being of people and the planet, including a commitment to green economies with sustainable production and consumption, care and education at its heart;

(c)   Development of a global framework to maintain ecological integrity, strengthen national and international environmental law and achieve all the resolutions of the United Nations Environment Assembly in a fully integrated manner, as well as the implementation of a One Health approach to safeguard against future pandemic risk;

(d)   Inclusion of non-governmental organizations, including those from the global South, in truly cross-sectoral, inclusive partnerships;

(e)   Leadership and commitment towards a post-2030 development agenda based on a culturally sensitive, inclusive and fair negotiation process.

III. Local authorities

16.   Local public service provision has been at the forefront of policies about caring for people and the planet through services for water and sanitation, energy, housing, urban planning, climate protection, urban mobility, education, access to technology and health, among others. Local and regional governments are ready to scale up high-impact localized service delivery and mobilize partnerships to close the gap between planning and delivery for the next generation of service provision.

17.   The delivery of and access to the next generation of services must be defined. Issues to consider include protecting civil society, fostering proximity and territorial cohesion, gaining access to technology, guaranteeing the right to the city, renewing cultural rights, countering the monetizing of care and acknowledging diverse and informal economies.

18.   Sustainable Development Goal 11, on sustainable cities and communities, allows local authorities to care for people, the planet and governments and to address the crises affecting humanity, such as the housing, climate and democracy crises. Beyond being just the Goal for cities, it serves as an invitation for local authorities to balance urban centres with their territories and is a Goal for the world. Ensuring the achievement of Goal 11 enables local authorities to address inequalities, foster sustainability and realize good governance and local democracy.

19.   Addressing inequalities and their multidimensional roots is vital for a new social contract based on justice and democracy. This means guaranteeing the rights, needs and aspirations of historically marginalized people and fostering gender equality and the participation of local feminist leaders in decision-making.

20.   Local and regional governments have a critical role in securing water supply and sanitation services for their communities. These governments must be included in water governance to ensure that it is managed as a common good, protecting aquatic ecosystems and biodiversity and fostering healthy lives.

21.   Disaster risk reduction and support for local and regional governments and actors on the ground must be key priorities to avoid humanitarian crises. These include strengthening the capacity for emergency governance and promoting community participation and ownership.

22. Changing humanity's relationship with nature to address the climate crisis includes re-embedding urban systems within natural systems, making the transition from unsustainable resource extraction, fostering circular resource use and protecting ecosystems. These require cultural and context-based approaches that engage communities.

23. High-impact partnerships, essential to accelerating the implementation of the 2030 Agenda in the light of the Sustainable Development Goals Summit and review of Goal 11, start from the ground up. Local and regional governments, as protectors of communities and hubs of dialogue, co-creation and innovation, will continue to engage in inclusive multi-stakeholder partnerships to leave no one behind.

24. Achieving the Sustainable Development Goals will depend on revisiting financial architecture and securing adequate funding and direct revenue streams for local and regional governments. This means ensuring access to subnational financial engineering and intermediation to design innovative solutions and mobilize blended finance for increased resilience to emergencies.

25. Voluntary local reviews and voluntary subnational reviews are critical tools for policymaking, going beyond monitoring and promoting local initiatives and ownership. They need concrete spaces within the high-level political forum on sustainable development to complement voluntary national reviews.

26. Localization and Sustainable Development Goal 11, as the enabler for all the Goals, can support and strengthen the renewal of a multilateral system on the basis of solidarity, trust and whole-of-government and whole-of-society society approaches, with an eye towards future generations.

IV. Workers and trade unions

27. The current multiple crises are taking a devastating toll on people and the planet while exacerbating a decades-long trend in the erosion of workers' rights and a century-long decrease in the labour share of gross domestic product.

28. In this context, trade unions are calling for a new social contract[1] rooted in a gender-transformative agenda and based on:

   (a)   Jobs: investment in decent and climate-friendly jobs with a just transition;

   (b)   Rights: the promise of the International Labour Organization Centenary Declaration for the Future of Work, of rights and protections for all workers;

   (c)   Wages: minimum living wages and equal pay, established through statutory processes or collective bargaining;

   (d)   Social protection for all, with a global social protection fund for the poorest countries;

   (e)   Equality of income, gender and race;

   (f)   Inclusion: a rights-based development model realized through the Sustainable Development Goals and multilateral reform.

29. Key requests with respect to the Sustainable Development Goals under review at the 2023 high-level political forum on sustainable development are the following:

   (a)   Sustainable Development Goal 6:

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[1] See www.ituc-csi.org/IMG/pdf/5co-final-statement-en.pdf.

(i) Recognize the universal access to safe drinking water and sanitation as a human right;

(ii) Invest in public safe drinking water and sanitation services;

(iii) Extend social protection coverage to those exposed to water insecurity;

(iv) Invest in decent and climate-friendly jobs in water resources management and sanitation services;

(v) Establish social dialogue mechanisms on water and sanitation management;

(vi) Support a global treaty on plastic pollution as a key element to improve water quality;

(b) Sustainable Development Goal 7:

(i) Recognize access to energy as a human right and ensure universal access to affordable, reliable and modern energy services;

(ii) Promote the creation of decent and climate-friendly jobs in renewable energy;

(iii) End wasteful government subsidies to fossil fuel companies while ensuring the protection of households against energy poverty;

(iv) Step up international climate finance to support renewable energy production in developing countries and establish accountability mechanisms for sustainable investment;

(c) Sustainable Development Goal 9:

(i) Increase public sector-led investment in infrastructure to meet development needs and support decent job creation;

(ii) Ensure that industrialization is based on a just transition, produces shared outcomes through minimum living wages and is accompanied by gender-responsive lifelong learning;

(iii) Support micro-, small and medium-sized enterprises and promote the formalization of the informal economy;

(iv) Reduce the dependency on foreign products in crucial sectors (e.g., food, energy and pharmaceutical);

(v) Ensure access to high-quality and affordable Internet and proactive digitalization policies aligned with labour rights;

(d) Sustainable Development Goal 11:

(i) Promote sustainable cities by accelerating the decarbonization of urban transport, expanding access to decent housing and infrastructure for all and investing in high-quality public services that are local and in proximity;

(ii) Ensure urban resilience to extreme weather conditions and disasters;

(e) Sustainable Development Goal 17: Build a renewed multilateralism on the basis of social dialogue to redress the uneven distribution of power and wealth at the international level.

Centrality of Sustainable Development Goal 8 and a just transition at the 2023 high-level political forum on sustainable development

30. Sustainable Development Goal 8, on decent work and economic growth, is key for a human-centred, sustainable recovery. Indeed, with its targets on jobs, workers' rights, decent work, social protection, inclusive growth and environmental preservation, Goal 8 provides strong leverage for other Goals, including those under review at the 2023 high-level political forum on sustainable development.

31. For that reason, trade unions call for recovery and resilience driven by Sustainable Development Goal 8 and support related United Nations processes, such as the Global Accelerator for Jobs and Social Protection[2] and the proposal for a World Social Summit in 2025. Midway to 2030, the Goals are more relevant than ever. Only an inclusive multilateral system, with social partners on board, will pave the way to global resilience.

V. Education and academia stakeholder group

32. The COVID-19 pandemic has resulted in unprecedented global school closures and the shutdown of many educational and learning opportunities. The effects have been felt worldwide, with children, young people and adults experiencing setbacks in their learning, development and well-being, as well as in their social safety nets.

33. After the first few waves of reflection, analyses and attempts to build back better, there has been a growing recognition that education cannot be focused simply on recovery and passive adaptation. Nor should education be only about building resilience. Rather, the urgent need for transformative education has been highlighted as a way to support learners in making informed decisions and taking action at the individual, community and global levels. In doing so, learners are proactive and can make substantial changes in the contexts that generate crises. This concept has gained traction as a potential solution to many of the challenges facing education.

34. Health has not been the only Sustainable Development Goal-related factor that has been negatively affected by the COVID-19 crisis; there has also been a decline in democracy and human rights. The world is witnessing an increase in authoritarianism, with a mere 13 per cent of the global population living in liberal democracies, according to the V-Dem Institute "Democracy report 2023". Declines in academic freedom have recently taken place in correlation with the increased move to autocracy. The world needs a policy framework and action to protect academic freedom, as well as increased support for citizenship education and education for peace and tolerance.

35. As the world looks to achieve Sustainable Development Goal 4, it is crucial to consider its links with other goals, including addressing systemic inequalities, to realize in full the potential of education as a transformative tool for achieving a sustainable and equitable future. This requires education that can boost knowledge, empower citizens and build the skills needed in twenty-first century workplaces, as well as increase environmental, financial and digital literacy through lifelong learning. In addition, financing for education must be expanded to ensure that the universal right to education is honoured in practice, with an emphasis on the need to increase public funding for education and lifelong learning, especially for vulnerable groups.

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[2] See United Nations, "Secretary-General calls for accelerated action on jobs and social protection to avoid an uneven global recovery and prevent future crises", press release, 28 September 2021.

36. Previous crises have also highlighted deep-rooted social injustices and have further exacerbated pre-existing inequalities between people and between countries. The consequences have become even more critical for vulnerable groups who are deprived of the right to education, such as women and girls, older persons, persons with disabilities, people living in emergency situations and people living in dire material conditions. To address these disparities, the education and academia stakeholder group promotes inclusive and equitable high-quality learning opportunities and outcomes throughout the life course. This includes adult learning in all its many and creative manifestations, in work and life, whether formal or informal. Sustainable Development Goal 4 should therefore be achieved in all its facets, keeping in mind that adult education is the longest phase in the lifelong learning process. A new social contract for education as laid out in the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization report entitled *Reimagining Our Futures Together: A New Social Contract for Education* must be built on these principles, promoting lifelong learning for all and addressing systemic inequalities, to ensure a sustainable and equitable future for all.

VI. Business and industry major group

37. The Secretary-General, in his report entitled "Our Common Agenda" (A/75/982), emphasized working together to achieve the 2030 Agenda. The role of the private sector in partnering, collaborating and delivering the Sustainable Development Goals is highlighted clearly, as is the potential of moving to practical and inclusive multilateralism for action.

38. As the world reaches the midpoint towards the 2030 Agenda, the international community is behind and, in some cases, off track in meeting the Sustainable Development Goals. Over the coming two years, all United Nations meetings should contribute to coherent and concerted efforts to advance implementation. All stakeholders agree that the scale and pace of action must expand and accelerate. Business has played a central role in many ways to advance the Goals, but it needs and is ready to do more. To this end, there is an urgent need to strengthen the problem-solving dialogue between the private sector and the United Nations system at the national, regional and global levels.

39. The Secretary-General has called for a decade of action to accelerate momentum on sustainable development to ensure that "no one is left behind". Recovering sustainably in this decade of action and delivery will require an even stronger commitment to multi-stakeholder engagement and partnership through inclusive multilateralism. In particular, the private sector must be a meaningful partner in building back better – contributing funding, innovation, expertise, technology, fresh ideas and the diverse perspectives from business and employers, in particular small and medium-sized enterprises.

40. The business community is an integral part of required solutions and is ready to share its knowledge and skills in science and technology, data management and impact and, most important, its plans for the next generation of innovations.

41. Business is committed to the Sustainable Development Goals because of the strong business case for doing so. Companies cannot function successfully in a world rife with poverty and environmental crises. Indeed, the 2030 Agenda itself unlocks business opportunities and the potential for decent job creation.

42. Food systems transformation is key to the advancement of many of the Sustainable Development Goals. To this end, the private sector has made and continues to make serious efforts towards sustainable and resilient food systems. For

these efforts to create lasting impact at scale, it is essential that Governments intensify collaboration with the private sector and other stakeholders to address the varying layers of disadvantages faced by the rural and urban poor, including chronic poverty and hunger, lack of access to health care and lack of infrastructure and connectivity.

43. In the coming two years, to bring forward what the President of the General Assembly has termed "solutions through solidarity, sustainability and science", the international community must build trust among stakeholders, be inclusive and, most important, listen to the views of all, as follows:

(a) Private sector representatives seek greater inclusivity of business and continuing formal cooperation between private and public sectors. The potential of the private sector to work with Governments, stakeholders and social partners across the international community to build a prosperous and sustainable global economy and deliver sustainability solutions holds significant potential to accelerate Sustainable Development Goal delivery;

(b) Business underscores the importance of international solidarity to address inequities between countries and ensure that the weakest and least developed nations receive the support necessary to advance sustainably. Governments must prioritize relevant and functional education to ensure a suitably equipped labour force, especially in this age of innovation and technology;

(c) Business calls upon Governments to create enabling environments for business that foster entrepreneurship, job creation, economic growth, access to education and sustainable development. Unemployment is the primary cause of poverty. Open, dynamic and inclusive labour markets are needed to empower people to thrive. Employment barriers must be removed, in particular for underrepresented groups in the labour market. Lack of high-quality functional education contributes to unemployment.

VII. Persons with disabilities

44. The stakeholder group of persons with disabilities recommends the following to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals for persons with disabilities, recognizing the important interaction with the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. The COVID-19 pandemic has disproportionately affected persons with disabilities. Governments and the United Nations system should ensure the rights and participation of persons with disabilities in COVID-19 response and recovery efforts. Throughout the road to 2030, progress on accessibility and inclusion must advance.

45. Limited access to drinking water, sanitation and hygiene facilities and services disproportionately affects persons with disabilities. Governments should invest in and allocate financial resources to make water, sanitation and hygiene facilities in households and public settings accessible, prioritizing schools, workplaces, health facilities and communal facilities.

46. The main barriers affecting digital access and inclusion for persons with disabilities are the affordability of and lack of access to technology products, as well as the need for digital literacy. Governments should ensure that strategies, regulations and initiatives, including COVID-19 recovery plans related to the digital world, include persons with disabilities.

47. Barriers to information and communications technologies (ICT) and cultural attitudes such as negative stereotyping and stigma have contributed to the exclusion and marginalization of persons with disabilities in urban communities. Governments should engage persons with disabilities and their representative organizations in the

design, implementation and monitoring of urban programmes, policies and plans that include disaster risk reduction and climate action planning. Processes and consultations should be accessible to persons with disabilities with adequate support available, where necessary, in the form of reasonable accommodation.

48.   Climate resilience programmes and disaster risk reduction strategies and policies should make disability a core, cross-cutting theme and must be included in the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals and the implementation of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015–2030 to ensure that they are both realized in line with articles 11, 21 and 25 of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

49.   Governments should support multi-stakeholder partnerships working with persons with disabilities, following the human rights model, to increase the participation and inclusion of persons with disabilities and their representative organizations. These should be accessible and inclusive consultations and support access to funding and opportunities for organizations of persons with disabilities to strengthen their organizations and technical capacities to be able to engage meaningfully.

50.   International cooperation must align its objectives with the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. Statisticians must begin to collect disability data and inform policymakers, who, in collaboration with organizations of persons with disabilities and in line with the Convention, must enact new evidence-based regulations and laws to ensure the inclusion and equal participation of persons with disabilities in society.

VIII. Volunteer groups

51.   Through volunteers, accelerating the recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic and the full implementation of the 2030 Agenda at all levels is made more possible.

52.   With more than 1 billion people volunteering annually, the world is recognizing the power of volunteers, as highlighted in the ministerial declaration of the 2022 high-level political forum on sustainable development (see E/HLS/2022/1): "We express our highest appreciation of, and support for, the dedication, efforts and sacrifices, above and beyond the call of duty of all health professionals and workers and all other relevant frontline workers and volunteers in responding to the COVID-19 pandemic".

53.   Volunteers build hope and resilience, improve lives and strengthen sustainable development. Every day, volunteers meet community needs and exercise leadership roles on the front line in national responses and recovery. Volunteers remain critical to addressing the consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic and restoring communities.

54.   It is more important than ever for Member States to fulfil their commitments, made under the plan of action on volunteering for the 2030 Agenda (see A/76/137), to promote the meaningful participation and involvement of volunteers in partnerships. The promotion of conducive environments for volunteering is important. Volunteers enhance the sustainability of development results as they continue to increase community recognition of the value of civil society. Thus, the recommendations of the volunteer groups to Member States are as follows:

Recommendations

National strategies

55.   Volunteers build bridges by brokering relationships between communities, State authorities and other development stakeholders. The volunteer groups ask Member States:

        (a)   To integrate volunteering into policies and national development strategies and into their voluntary national reviews at the high-level political forum on sustainable development to create a more enabling environment for volunteering;

        (b)   To engage as partners and advocates for policies supporting an enabling environment for volunteering;

        (c)   To explore national and global partnerships and collaboration to leverage efforts towards the support for and promotion of volunteering;

        (d)   To build coalitions and networks for learning and shared action on developing an enabling environment for volunteering;

        (e)   To adopt the Global Volunteering Standard to strengthen the quality of volunteering.

Inclusive diversity

56.   While volunteering offers diverse paths to civic participation, gaps remain in volunteer practices and aspirations across countries and regions. The volunteer groups ask Member States:

        (a)   To build on experiences of promoting volunteering among young people and extend these opportunities to all demographic groups, especially through virtual and hybrid volunteer opportunities;

        (b)   To recognize, work with and support community-led volunteering systems and informal volunteers, involving them as equal partners in the volunteering space;

        (c)   To address barriers to volunteering faced by marginalized groups, ensuring that all volunteers are valued and supported as partners in social change;

        (d)   To address gender-related volunteering disparities and inequalities, recognizing that the disproportionate burden of care falls on women around the world.

Measuring success

57.   Volunteering enables people from all walks of life to shape and own development in their communities. The volunteer groups ask Member States:

        (a)   To invest in volunteer data and research on and measurement of the scope of volunteer work for the Sustainable Development Goals by accelerating investment and the use of technology in measuring the scale of volunteering;

        (b)   To increase support for the collection of evidence and statistics on volunteer work[3] and the economic and social contributions of volunteers;

        (c)   To support a wider range of evidence-based, quality volunteering practices, knowledge-sharing and the scaling up ways to address barriers to volunteering for marginalized groups;

        (d)   To accept citizen-generated data to inform Sustainable Development Goal review processes and national plans.

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        [3] See https://ilostat.ilo.org/topics/volunteer-work/.

IX. Ageing

58.   The world's population is ageing. There were 727 million persons aged 65 and over in 2020, with a projected growth to 1.5 billion in 2050. In 2021, older persons accounted for more than 1 billion people, with 70 per cent living in low- and middle-income countries, and the majority live in urban areas. To ensure that neither today's generation nor future generations of older persons are left behind, the full implementation of the 2030 Agenda must include the means for older persons to enjoy their independence, preserve their dignity, participate fully in society and retain their rights. Society's perception of older persons, older age and ageing must be transformed to ensure that older persons are accepted as valuable contributors to their families, communities and the national economy, not merely as recipients of medical rehabilitation and social welfare.

59.   A human rights and life-course approach is necessary to ensure the intersection of the global megatrends of urbanization and population ageing. Policies and programmes that promote healthy ageing also benefit younger people as they age.

60.   Technological advances present opportunities to achieve the 2030 Agenda. However, older persons are at risk of being left behind in the digital world owing to the increasing digitalization of everyday life. In the European Union, almost 40 per cent of those aged 65 to 74 do not use the Internet. Efforts to ensure access to and knowledge of digital technology for those aged 65 or over are essential. The International Telecommunication Union report, entitled "Ageing in a Digital World", provides an age-inclusive road map to follow.

61.   Member States have committed themselves to the protection of the human rights of older persons in a number of areas, namely, the establishment of the United Nations Decade of Healthy Ageing (2021–2030), the adoption by the Human Rights Council of its resolution 48/3, in which the Council encouraged States to take measures to combat ageism and eliminate age discrimination, and the establishment of the World Health Organization Global Network for Age-friendly Cities and Communities.

Recommendations

62.   The stakeholder group on ageing recommends that Member States and subnational and local governments put in place policies, programmes and budgets that:

        (a)   Include older persons in the development of (ICT);

        (b)   Adopt age-inclusive ICT accessibility and quality standards and provide appropriate training to guarantee the use of digital technology by older persons, recognizing the need to overcome sensory and cognitive conditions for some older persons;

        (c)   Ensure the participation of older persons in all their diversity in the development of master urban and territorial plans;

        (d)   Contribute to the global effort of the United Nations Decade of Healthy Ageing (2021–2030);

        (e)   Engage in Global Network for Age-friendly Cities and Communities initiatives;

        (f)   Adopt policy implementation tools to mainstream ageing and carry out age-sensitive analysis;

(g)   Implement the New Urban Agenda as a road map to improving the lives of older people in cities;

(h)   Collect and use age-inclusive disaggregated data reaching all older persons;

(i)   Support the efforts of the Open-ended Working Group on Ageing to create a convention to protect the rights of older persons.

X.   Asia-Pacific regional civil society organization engagement

63.   Halfway towards the deadline of implementing the 2030 Agenda, it is becoming increasingly apparent that the world is not only years, but also decades, behind in achieving its goals. The world was off track prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, but the past three years have been particularly disastrous owing to the exacerbating effects of the pandemic, the worsening planetary and energy crises, increasing militarism and conflicts and the rise of patriarchy and patriarchal authoritarian governance.

64.   Some 574 million people globally will live in extreme poverty and a similar number of people will face hunger by 2030. The goals under review in 2023 also do not inspire confidence. For example, 1.6 billion people will lack safe drinking water and 2.8 billion people will be without sanitation and hygiene facilities or services in 2030 (Sustainable Development Goal 6). Notwithstanding a slight increase in access to electricity, 100 million people might revert to solid fuels and 679 million will remain without access to electricity in 2030 (Goal 7). Less than half of the countries that committed themselves to ending the international financing of fossil fuels by 2022 were able to enact credible policies towards doing so. While mobile connectivity has increased, half the world's population has no equipment to gain access to it, and the digital divide has an impact on women more than men (Goal 9). Cities and the urban poor were devastated by the COVID-19 pandemic and the climate crisis, and 99 per cent of the urban population will continue to breathe polluted air, affecting human and environmental health (Goal 11).

65.   More than half of low-income countries (and a significant number of the lower-middle-income countries) are either in or on the verge of debt distress. Low-income countries accounted for less than 2 per cent in the recent International Monetary Fund (IMF) special drawing right allocations. Official development assistance (ODA), although increasing, still accounts for less than 1 per cent of the total fiscal stimulus during the COVID-19 pandemic ($16 trillion). ODA backlogs over the past 50 years have reached up to $5.6 trillion, which is supposed to be capable of reducing extreme poverty. People living in least developed countries are overwhelmingly represented in the number of casualties owing to extreme climate events and account for 69 per cent of deaths globally. While the sustainability agenda continues to lack critical resources, global military expenditure surpassed $2 trillion for the first time in 2021 and has been on the rise since. This happened in the middle of the pandemic, during which only the five top spenders invested more than $1.3 trillion (62 per cent) in weapons, while ODA could not even reach 200 or so billion. The Sustainable Development Goal financing gap has also increased from $2.5 trillion annually to $4.2 trillion annually. The tax revenue of the low-income countries and the lower-middle-income countries put together is $4.86 trillion, and they cannot fulfil Goal financing gaps without significant international financial collaboration.

66.   Countries in the region also continue to face disasters. Pakistan faced floods of biblical proportions in 2022 that killed more than 1,700 people, displaced 33 million and caused economic losses of more than $30 billion. The people and communities in the region dependent on natural resources have suffered chronic impacts much earlier

and deeper than predicted, requiring urgent mitigation and adaptation support. This is an altogether untenable situation worsened by increasing biodiversity loss, pollution and depleting means of livelihood.

67. Aside from a lack of progress made on the Sustainable Development Goals, the Asia-Pacific region has also seen a decline in human rights and a rise in authoritarian Governments. The rights to freedom of expression and freedom of assembly and the rights of women and girls, human rights defenders and environmental defenders, minorities, media personnel and civil society activists have been violated with impunity by both State and non-State actors. The securitization narrative has curbed the space for dialogue and accountability, while persecution of democratic dissent is constantly on the rise.

68. In 2023, the prospect of recovery looks extremely weak. Plateaued foreign direct investment, the outflow of capital from developing countries through illicit financial flows, tax evasion, profit shifting, investor-State dispute settlement penalties and the continuing debt crisis have shrunk national fiscal capacities critical for COVID-19 recovery efforts. Conversely, international financial institutions, especially IMF, continue to push for belt-tightening measures across more than 75 per cent of the loan programmes negotiated during the pandemic, notwithstanding its very lesson to strengthen public service infrastructure – the lack of which wreaked havoc in the first place. Similarly, multilateral processes continue to be fraught with contradictions that breed policy incoherence, reflective of the IMF Catastrophe Containment and Relief Trust and the Group of 20's Debt Service Suspension Initiative, as opposed to the permanent cancellation of sovereign debt, and Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights flexibilities instead of a full waiver, to address financial crises and vaccine apartheid in the global South.

69. Fractured multilateralism, a profit-driven neoliberal framework, asymmetry in global power relations, the hegemony of imperialist countries and their devices and patterns, the domination of behemoth corporations, aid-for-trade rules benefiting the global North, and the division between sustainable development and respect for human rights fuelling persistent inequities have been the fundamental structural flaws in humankind's weak global governance. There is no sustainability without equity and justice. Unless the conceptualization of societal transformation addresses these systemic failures, upholds development justice and ensures the right to development for all, achieving the Sustainable Development Goals will remain a pipe dream.

XI. Communities who experience discrimination based on work and descent

70. Communities who experience discrimination based on work and descent are dangerously undocumented or underdocumented. The caste system in Asia is globally the most commonly known example of discrimination based on work and descent. However, in Africa, Latin America and Europe, the phenomenon is also common, founded on complex beliefs and behavioural systems and enforced systematically.

71. The mapping and documentation of these communities are hindered by the historic invisiblization of those who experience this unique, socially cemented social stratification. Socially "dominant" castes and classes reject acknowledgment of its existence and continue to profit from this belief system.

72. Consequently, for the 2023 high-level political forum on sustainable development, communities who experience discrimination based on work and descent are focusing on a call for global partnerships in and beyond Sustainable Development Goal 17 to recognize the 270 million individuals who belong to these communities.

73.   The Dalits and burakumin in Asia, the Haratin in Africa, the Roma/Romani people in Europe and the Quilombolas in South America form a small selection of the various groups who experience oppression through discrimination based on work and descent.

74.   Gender-based violence, including sexual violence, the enslavement of women and girls and control of their reproductive rights, is a common enforcement mechanism of the imposed "social order" forced onto them.

75.   Communities who experience discrimination based on work and descent do not share a common history or origin but a common scarring by a social structure that ascribes a permanent status of devalued personhood and requires of community members the performance of stigmatized and exploitative forms of labour.

76.   This mode of oppression diminishes the life chances of 270 million individuals, whose number is the equivalent of what would be the population of the fifth largest country in the world. Their oppression has yet to be fully recognized by the global community, including the United Nations and its institutions.

77.   The oppressor or "dominant" group often shares the same race, ethnic background and language as the oppressed group, predating colonial enslavement. The caste system in Asia is the most commonly known example of discrimination based on work and descent globally.

78.   Communities who experience discrimination based on work and descent are characterized by the stigma of "impurity, pollution or uncleanliness" by birth, which is often reinforced by physically segregated housing and living spaces and lack of access to water and sanitation. A lack of electricity, water and other infrastructure characterizes their settlements.

79.   Menial manual labour, often related to human and animal death, and related tasks of servitude characterize the often-hereditary work element of the communities who experience discrimination based on work and descent. Access to water and sanitation is of the utmost importance in such circumstances.

Recommendations

80.   The communities who experience discrimination based on work and descent call upon Member States to undertake the following:

     (a)   Recognition of the more than 270 million individuals who belong to communities who experience discrimination based on work and descent, to achieve global partnership (Sustainable Development Goal 17) approaches of State and non-State actors to design and implement strategies for these communities;

     (b)   Collect disaggregated data and mapping data, implement quota systems in education, housing and scholarships, and design further strategies to eliminate discrimination based on work and descent in a partnership approach with each community;

     (c)   Facilitate access to justice systems at all levels and enforce decisions to uphold the rights of each individual.

XII. Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex persons

81. The implementation of the 2030 Agenda was already falling behind when the COVID-19 pandemic began. While harmful to all, those furthest left behind, including lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex (LGBTI) populations, saw their vulnerabilities amplified by this crisis. As the world seeks to accelerate its pandemic recovery, marginalized populations must be at the centre of all decision-making, implementation and evaluation processes.

82. Around the globe, LGBTI populations experience stigma, discrimination, violence and other human rights violations on the basis of their sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression and sex characteristics. LGBTI populations who face multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination owing to their gender, age, race, ethnicity, ability, class, caste, socioeconomic status, migration status and other factors that drive exclusion are even more marginalized.

83. LGBTI populations already faced barriers to participating in development spaces and benefits before the COVID-19 pandemic. The crisis and States' responses compounded the exclusion and deprivation by deepening existing social, economic and political inequalities and reinforcing barriers to access to education, employment, health care, food, shelter and other rights and services.

84. If not centred in COVID-19 pandemic recovery efforts, LGBTI populations are at an urgent risk of being further left behind. They must be included in the achievement and revision of all Sustainable Development Goals, including Goals 6, 11 and 17, which are being reviewed in 2023.

85. To achieve Goal 6, States must consider the unique barriers to clean water and sanitation faced by LGBTI populations. Frequently facing conditions of vulnerability with a lack of access to clean water exposes them to greater health risks and infections.

86. In the light of income disparities and discrimination, LGBTI populations face repeated evictions and forced relocation owing to violent attacks in their homes or communities. More efforts must be centred on the achievement of Sustainable Development Goal 11, which is intended to ensure universal access to safe and affordable housing, public transport and public spaces. LGBTI populations are more likely to experience homophobic acts from their own families, suffer from forced displacement and migration, and face street harassment, violence and denial of access while using public transportation and public spaces, which are services on which they rely primarily.

87. Lastly, States must ensure that LGBTI populations are included in the achievement of Sustainable Development Goal 17, including when States safely collect disaggregated data, without which it is impossible to determine whether the Goals are being achieved equitably.

88. The theme of the 2023 high-level political forum on sustainable development, "Accelerating the recovery from the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) and the full implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development at all levels", gives Member States and stakeholders the opportunity to include LGBTI populations and address cis-heteronormative patriarchal structures in their recovery and development initiatives. The stakeholder group for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex persons calls upon all stakeholders to centre LGBTI populations as they seek to fulfil the 2030 Agenda to guarantee that all people can exercise their rights equally and to promote a sustainable and resilient recovery.

XIII. Financing for development major group

89. The financing for development major group calls upon Member States to address the following systematic solutions to tackle the broken global economic architecture:

(a) The organization of the next financing for development conference in 2025. The financing for development major group welcomes the adoption of the 2022 General Assembly resolution on financing for development to "consider convening, in 2025, a fourth international conference on financing for development". The group calls upon all Member States to adopt strong modalities for preparatory Member State-led intergovernmental negotiation rounds that are transparent and inclusive, allowing the full and effective participation of civil society;

(b) Debt cancellations and the establishment of a sovereign debt workout mechanism at the United Nations to address unsustainable and illegitimate debt. It is evident that current ad hoc international initiatives to address debt crises are insufficient and that systematic solutions are vital to avoid devastating impacts, especially on developing countries;

(c) A United Nations tax convention to comprehensively address tax havens, tax abuse by multinational corporations and other illicit financial flows. The financing for development major group welcomes the approval by consensus of the Africa Group's 2022 proposal to the General Assembly to begin intergovernmental negotiations to strengthen inclusive and effective tax cooperation. The group calls upon all Member States to work towards an agreement on an effective United Nations tax convention;

(d) Termination of investor-State dispute settlement mechanisms. Member States should formulate a multilateral agreement for a coordinated and permanent termination of investor-State dispute settlement mechanisms that have empowered transnational corporations to sue Governments in confidential tribunals on a range of issues, including debt, tax and, increasingly, climate action;

(e) A review of the development outcomes of public-private-partnerships, blended finance and other financing mechanisms established to promote a "private finance first" approach to infrastructure and public services. The COVID-19 pandemic has provided a stark reminder of the importance of universal, timely, affordable, gender-responsive, high-quality and accessible public services, as well as sustainable infrastructure;

(f) Accelerated implementation of ODA commitments to fulfil and exceed the 0.7 per cent target for such assistance in the form of unconditional grants. As the ambitions of the 2030 Agenda focus on the future, it is vital that long-standing commitments to deliver international development assistance, including ensuring quality and effectiveness, are realized and commitments secured to make up for the shortfall in unfulfilled targets of the past years, in addition to future targets for ODA flows;

(g) An assessment of the systemic risks posed by unregulated or inadequately regulated financial sector instruments and actors. Member States should assess the current financial "non-system" and undertake decisive steps towards financial regulation. This includes the regulation and supervision of credit rating agencies, a global regulatory framework for the asset management industry and a global agreement on the importance of capital account management;

(h) A global technology assessment mechanism at the United Nations. As the United Nations, Governments and institutions grapple with the governance of digital

technologies, there is an urgent need for transparent and inclusive Member State-led deliberations on the current and potential impacts of those technologies on the environment, the labour market, tax policy, livelihoods and society;

(i)   Measures to ensure fiscal space and the scaling up of international cooperation for decent job creation and universal social protection in line with the Sustainable Development Goals and International Labour Organization standards. The COVID-19 pandemic has illustrated the importance of ensuring adequate fiscal space to support the extension of social protection systems and offer universal coverage with social protection floors in line with the standards of the International Labour Organization.

XIV.   Scientific and technological community

90.   The message from the scientific and technological community, as the world reaches the midpoint in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals, is clear: the world is failing with regard to the Goals, and achieving their vision as a global plan of action for people, the planet and prosperity by 2030 seems increasingly unlikely. Progress made towards many Goals and their targets has deteriorated, including on ending extreme poverty, reducing inequality and unemployment, halting hunger and achieving food security and ensuring health and well-being, with the COVID-19 pandemic leading to a decrease in immunization coverage and an upsurge in mental health issues, among others. Recent cascading crises, while making the 2030 Agenda more pertinent than ever, have wiped out years of progress.

91.   Since agreeing to the 2030 Agenda in 2015, the world has faced a global pandemic affecting all aspects of human life and every public policy domain. The war in Ukraine, beyond being a human catastrophe, further destabilized the already fragile implementation context, exacerbating the uneven economic recovery from COVID-19 and exerting ripple effects that reverberate across and beyond the world's food, energy and finance systems. This confluence of crises is further compounded by other humanitarian crises such as that in the Horn of Africa, the political turmoil in Haiti, and the conflict, violence and weather shocks in South Sudan. Altogether, they are expected to lead to more than 230 million people requiring emergency assistance in 68 countries, further putting the implementation of the 2030 Agenda out of reach.

92.   Negative trends in halting climate change and reversing biodiversity loss do not solely undermine the world's chances to realize the Sustainable Development Goals by 2030 and beyond but represent an existential peril endangering the future of all living beings. Science is showing that both are consequences of centuries of accumulated anthropogenic impacts on the environment, which embody the disconnect between people and nature. Reversing the damage is essential to ensuring liveable conditions on the planet. It requires rethinking ways in which humankind interacts with, protects and values nature, and leveraging in full the power of nature to build a prosperous and resilient future, including through innovative engineering and nature-based solutions to address climate change.

93.   The fragile context and insufficient advances notwithstanding, the worst thing that humankind could do is to dismiss the Sustainable Development Goals. At the midway point of achievement in 2023, multilateral institutions and Governments must make a concerted effort to identify, assess and address the real and systemic barriers to achieving the Goals to date, many of which have been omitted or neglected. Governments and other relevant actors, in dialogue with the scientific and technological community, must evaluate successes and failures, and develop and harness existing tools and evidence-based practical guidance on tractable and

transformative solutions from the local to the global levels. They must also ensure that developmental benefits are distributed more evenly and do not exacerbate inequalities for the many while benefiting the few. These efforts are crucial to get back on track and raise awareness of the importance of the 2030 Agenda being a planetary plan critical for the survival and future prosperity of humankind.

94. In the face of calls for urgent action, the scientific and technological community urges Governments and the international community to focus on actionable knowledge and evidence-based prioritization grounded in Sustainable Development Goal interlinkages while minimizing unwanted trade-offs. This will provide a basis for effective action and foster policy coherence, while encouraging systems thinking and breaking down silos that hinder achievement of the Goals. As progress is made, scientists need to collaborate with various stakeholders to develop and make practical use of scenario and foresight exercises to gain a deeper understanding of the risks associated with not achieving the Goals and to identify viable pathways to success. Evidence-based transformation points and pathways are necessary for successful achievement of the Goals as the second half of the implementation period begins. Engineers have a crucial role in implementing solutions, requiring increased engineering education and skills development.

95. Enabling mission-oriented science for sustainability must be one of the key priorities of Governments and science funders in pursuing the Sustainable Development Goals. Accelerating achievement of the Goals requires deep engagement with complex, multisectoral contextual problems and systematic collaboration between scientists, engineers and other stakeholders to co-produce actionable knowledge and solutions that advance long-term sustainability locally and globally. This kind of transdisciplinary science requires visionary thinking and fundamentally disruptive action from science funders worldwide, stepping out of business-as-usual approaches to funding science, doing research and creating supportive institutional arrangements to implement sustainable science-based findings with impact.

XV. Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015–2030

96. In the past years, the world has witnessed the exacerbation of climate change and the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic and persistent conflicts, thus illuminating the ever-evolving and intricately connected nature of risks. These events have significant implications for how individuals, societies and Governments approach risk. This unique situation presents an opportunity for learning, which is crucial for assessing progress made in implementing the 2030 Agenda. To promote sustainable development, it is imperative that risks and potential opportunities associated with slow- and sudden-onset hazards are addressed without generating new risks.

97. The recommendations presented herein have been developed by the Sendai stakeholder engagement mechanism and represent the collective contributions of the 17 stakeholder constituencies. By taking into account the perspectives of diverse stakeholders, these recommendations have been designed to reflect a broad and inclusive approach to risk reduction.

98. Notwithstanding efforts to promote resilient and sustainable development, progress being made at the local level remains inadequate. To address this pressing concern, there is a need to prioritize investment in local action, which should be grounded in the voices of local communities and their traditional knowledge and be equitably acted upon. Such action should not take place in silos; instead, it is crucial to connect, collaborate and share experiences across them. Such an approach will

inspire collective ownership and foster meaningful collaboration, ultimately enhancing progress at all levels.

99.   Just as societies are holistic, diverse and integrated, so too must be the institutions that govern them. This means alignment and mutual reinforcement of global policies, domestic ministries working across silos, local authorities serving the entire individual at the community level and businesses responsibly using and providing resources without generating new risks. Moreover, these governance systems must be mutually reinforcing at all levels. These systems can strengthen coordination and coherence by linking disaster risk reduction to development (e.g., through a risk-informed development lens) and climate change (e.g., with an emphasis on adaptation and minimizing loss and damage).

100.   Notwithstanding increased attention given to leaving no one behind, efforts to address the vulnerabilities of communities and individuals most at risk remain inadequate. To avoid leaving anyone behind, it is essential that enhanced investment be prioritized to address the vulnerability of persons who are most at risk. This includes but is not limited to providing flexible and accessible financing and resource allocation mechanisms that enable these populations to respond to emerging risks and prioritize shifting needs.

101.   The COVID-19 pandemic provides an opportunity to learn from the risk governance failures and successes. The pandemic response has highlighted the need for a holistic approach to public health, recognizing that it cannot be considered in isolation from social, financial and environmental factors. Public health must be integrated with other risk reduction strategies. The pandemic has also shown that collaboration and resource mobilization for a common goal can be successful. Whether a public-private partnership, transboundary cooperation or scientific collaboration, all sectors need to prioritize the well-being of people and the planet over financial gains.

XVI.   Together 2030

102.   Together 2030 is a worldwide civil society initiative to promote and track the progress of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. On the basis of its members' experience, Together 2030 calls upon the 2023 high-level political forum to consider the following issues:

(a)   The clock is ticking. The 2023 high-level political forum should be recognized as the most action-oriented session of the high-level political forum ever. Countries should move from only identifying general suggestions and known barriers to sustainable development to overcoming them, while promoting concrete and actionable solutions to the most urgent problems;

(b)   Quality over quantity. The 2023 high-level political forum should represent a change in the monitoring of the 2030 Agenda as we know it. It should move away from the "more the merrier" mindset and provide a better guide and opportunity to increase the quality of the voluntary national review reports and the information on the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals. A meaningful debate on the voluntary national reviews is worth many presentations on the reviews with no concrete results;

(c)   Innovate, innovate and innovate! Thinking outside the box and being innovative should be a goal of the 2023 high-level political forum. Attempting to innovate while using the same strategies and language in each ministerial declaration is virtually impossible. The high-level political forum should challenge the United

Nations "agreed language" and be the catalyst for new political approaches that tackle an ever-fast-changing reality;

(d)   In our times, to lead is to include. Sustainable development is too important to leave to Governments alone. The 2030 Agenda clearly states that countries have primary responsibility for promoting their national sustainable development. This does not mean that they are the "only ones" responsible. Countries will fail in promoting sustainable development if they do not create enabling environments for stakeholders to participate in decision-making and solutions-building processes;

(e)   A synergetic way ahead. 2023 and 2024 will be critical for building a sustainable future for all, even beyond 2030. The 2024 Summit of the Future and its preparatory ministerial meeting in 2023, the unfolding United Nations development system reform at the national and regional levels and the high-level political forum must be seen as holistic, interdependent efforts. There is no chance for "persons, people and planet" or for those we are leaving behind without a more muscular multilateral system with the United Nations at its core. The 2023 high-level political forum must secure these linkages and ensure opportunities for cross-pollination among them.

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