



HIGH-LEVEL POLITICAL FORUM ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

#HLPF #SDGs #GlobalGoals sustainabledevelopment.un.org/hlpf/2021

How do we revamp and transform consumption and production and address and mitigate climate change?

Session on SDGs 12,13, 17 and interlinkages among those goals and with other SDGs

Wednesday, 7 July 2021, 3:00 PM - 5:00 PM

Secretariat Background Note

Introduction

Climate change, biodiversity loss, and pollution and waste are interlinked emergencies driven by human activities: addressing these crises will require major structural transformation in the way people live, work, produce and consume. SDG 12 on sustainable consumption and production (SCP) and SDG 13 on climate action are mutually reinforcing goals that will be achieved only with a strengthened global, action-oriented partnership that advances a bold vision and high levels of investment coming from governments and the private sector.

Successes and challenges¹

Despite a temporary reprieve due to the pandemic, preliminary data shows that greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions continued to grow in 2020, and that 2015-2020 was the warmest six-year period on record. Material footprint per capita (total raw materials extracted from anywhere to meet the final consumption demands of a national economy), and material consumption per capita (total raw materials extracted within a national economy to meet consumption demands coming from anywhere) both increased by 40% from 2000 to 2017, reaching 12.12 metric tons in 2017. High levels of waste have continued in recent years – for example, nearly 14% of food was lost, globally, between production and retail stages of the supply chain in 2016, and in 2019,

¹ Unless otherwise noted, data are from the Report of the Secretary-General on SDG Progress 2021 (advance, unedited copy) https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/27610SG_SDG_Progress_report_2021.pdf



Sustainable and resilient recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic that promotes the economic, social and environmental dimensions of sustainable development: building an inclusive and effective path for the achievement of the 2030 Agenda in the context of the decade of action and delivery for sustainable development



HIGH-LEVEL POLITICAL FORUM ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

#HLPF #SDGs #GlobalGoals sustainabledevelopment.un.org/hlpf/2021

53.6 million metric tons of e-waste was generated globally.² While resource productivity, or the ratio of GDP to material consumption, is rising in some parts of the world, globally it has remained stagnant in recent years and continues to lag behind global economic growth, with dangerous implications for the planet.³

In the face of these trends, governments are stepping up their efforts to implement existing frameworks and global agreements to combat climate change, enhance resilience, and move toward more sustainable approaches to consumption and production. Within the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change, 190 Parties (countries and the EU) have submitted a Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC) for achieving the Paris Agreement, and 125 developing countries are working toward national adaptation plans (NAPs). Under the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction, 118 Parties have reported a disaster risk reduction strategy. And between 2017 and 2020, 83 countries, territories and the EU reported on their implementation of the 10-Year Framework of Programmes on Sustainable Consumption and Production (10YFP), with more than 700 policies and activities reported to date.

Despite these positive efforts, however, the actions taken are nowhere near enough to achieve SDGs 12 and 13. Experts estimate that global emissions must fall by 45% from 2010 levels by 2030 in order to limit global warming to 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels. In parallel, countries must take aggressive action to reduce resource use per unit of GDP, enhance the sustainable use of natural resources, and address all forms of pollution and waste in order to bend the development curve toward a version of society where people live in a more balanced and harmonious relationship with nature.

Interlinkages, synergies and trade-offs

The synergies between SDGs 12 and 13 are undeniable: SDG 12 calls to reduce global material consumption and food waste and to rationalize inefficient fossil fuel subsidies, all of which will advance progress in mitigating and adapting to climate change. Halting deforestation and ramping up afforestation, which will be made possible in part by reshaping current agricultural

² The Global e-Waste Monitor 2020, <https://www.itu.int/myitu/-/media/Publications/2020-Publications/Global-E-waste-Monitor-2020.pdf>

³ Global Resources Outlook 2019



Sustainable and resilient recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic that promotes the economic, social and environmental dimensions of sustainable development: building an inclusive and effective path for the achievement of the 2030 Agenda in the context of the decade of action and delivery for sustainable development



HIGH-LEVEL POLITICAL FORUM ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

#HLPF #SDGs #GlobalGoals sustainabledevelopment.un.org/hlpf/2021

approaches, addresses climate change by creating carbon sinks and also safeguards biodiversity and water catchments (SDGs 2, 6, 15). Moving away from a fossil fuel-based linear economy toward bio-based circular economies will not only address climate change but also, by reducing pollution, waste, and the degradation of nature, will improve the health and wellbeing of current and future generations (SDG 3).

It is critical, however, to keep the central principle of the 2030 Agenda—to leave no one behind—at the heart of all efforts toward SDGs 12 and 13. Achieving these goals must not jeopardize the eradication of poverty in all its dimensions. A “just transition” must further provide for those whose livelihoods depend on the old ways of producing and consuming. In addition, specific industries like mining, which provides, for example, the minerals used in the batteries vital for scaling up renewable energy and sustainable transport, must be developed in an ethical manner that protects and bolsters the health and human rights of workers and communities, while ensuring minimal impact on the environment.

Recommendations for action: Mechanisms and partnerships to accelerate progress

As noted above, governments and companies have in recent years developed plans and commitments and processes to move toward SCP and climate action, and now is the time to implement these plans, fulfill these commitments, and further scale them up so that the level of action can deliver on the desired outcomes. To date, 131 countries have pledged or are considering a pledge to reach net-zero CO₂ emissions by 2050, but as noted above, significant cuts in emissions must be achieved much earlier than that in order to meet the Paris Agreement goals.⁴

Because many of the transformations needed to achieve SDG 12 and 13 are technically feasible but difficult to implement if left entirely to the market, tax incentives and other policy measures are needed to drive the private sector to act to scale. Hopeful signs include the fact that fossil fuel subsidies declined in 2019 to \$431.6 billion after two years of rising subsidies, and 2020 also likely saw further declines thanks in part to the lower oil demand and prices during the Covid-19 pandemic. Indeed, the pandemic recovery period may provide an unprecedented opportunity to

⁴ <https://www.un.org/en/climatechange/net-zero-coalition>



Sustainable and resilient recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic that promotes the economic, social and environmental dimensions of sustainable development: building an inclusive and effective path for the achievement of the 2030 Agenda in the context of the decade of action and delivery for sustainable development



HIGH-LEVEL POLITICAL FORUM ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

#HLPF #SDGs #GlobalGoals sustainabledevelopment.un.org/hlpf/2021

overcome inertia if governments respond with the requisite political will and direct recovery investments toward renewable energy, sustainable infrastructure, disaster risk reduction, nature-based solutions, and circular economy and green jobs, as well as international cooperation for a truly global impact. SDGs 12 and 13 can be achieved only with a strengthened global partnership (SDG 17), the private sector's genuine commitment to shift to sustainable production practices, and changes in consumption patterns. Such efforts must include proactively managing novel pollutants, and resource demands associated with new products and materials.

Action is needed at all levels. Cities and local governments are natural leaders in some of the necessary transformations, particularly because cities' high concentration of people allows shifts in consumption patterns and mobility that can lead the way for the rest of the world. Networks of cities have great potential as mechanisms for sharing good practices and building capacity. At the same time, the issues of SCP and climate change are global challenges that require global solutions, and the active engagement of the multilateral system, and increased financial support and investments from governments and the private sector. It is not enough for a country to "green" its own internal national activities and export the negative externalities to other regions, often in the Global South.

In 2009, the Parties to COP 16 agreed that "developed country Parties commit, in the context of meaningful mitigation actions and transparency on implementation, to a goal of mobilizing jointly USD 100 billion per year by 2020 to address the needs of developing countries," and the Paris Agreement included a reaffirmation of this commitment through 2025. According to the data available through 2018, these commitments have not yet been met, but trends are heading in the right direction.⁵ The UN Secretary-General has called on the international community to urgently scale up climate finance, specifically to increase grants, which currently stand at approximately USD 12 billion per year, and to ensure that at least 50% of climate financing is directed toward adaptation and resilience measures.⁶ Blended finance approaches hold promise, as does divestment from fossil fuels and investment in other energy sources, with that investment organized around services rather than supply.

⁵ "Delivering on the \$100 billion Climate Finance Commitment and Transforming Climate Finance," report by the Independent Expert Group on Climate Finance, December 2020

⁶ <https://www.un.org/press/en/2021/sgsm20674.doc.htm>



Sustainable and resilient recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic that promotes the economic, social and environmental dimensions of sustainable development: building an inclusive and effective path for the achievement of the 2030 Agenda in the context of the decade of action and delivery for sustainable development



HIGH-LEVEL POLITICAL FORUM ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

#HLPF #SDGs #GlobalGoals sustainabledevelopment.un.org/hlpf/2021

A whole of society and whole of government approach is needed, one that brings in all members of society as changemakers, including women, youth, older people, people living with disabilities, smallholder farmers and other traditionally marginalized groups. Local and indigenous knowledge is a rich source of solutions, in addressing climate change and reducing disaster risk as well as in promoting circular economy models. Education and lifelong learning will be crucial, and new strategies—taking into account the rapidly changing technological landscape—for communicating risks and advancing innovative solutions will also be important.

The necessary transformations are deep and far-reaching, and they need to take place on an accelerated timeline. The current session will address concrete policies and actions needed to make meaningful progress in SCP and in combatting climate change and will explore the vital and interrelated roles of governments, business, communities, civil society and the multilateral system.

Proposed guiding questions

- What have been the trends on SDG 12 and 13?
- What broad-based economic and social transformations are needed to make consumption and production systems more sustainable, to arrest climate change, reduce waste, and restore the relationship between human society and nature?
- How can transformations towards carbon neutrality also promote sustainable consumption and production, including with new materials and products?
- How can these transformations also promote gender equality and ensure that no one is left behind?
- What are the opportunities to be realized (and pitfalls to be avoided) in the immediate and medium terms towards these ends? How can international cooperation support?



Sustainable and resilient recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic that promotes the economic, social and environmental dimensions of sustainable development: building an inclusive and effective path for the achievement of the 2030 Agenda in the context of the decade of action and delivery for sustainable development