

REVIEWING THE IMPLEMENTATION OF SELECT SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS - A SOUTHERN PERSPECTIVE

Yuefen Li, Viviana Muñoz Tellez, Vahini Naidu,
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September 2024

South Centre

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This report was submitted in May 2024.

Authors:

Yuefen Li is Senior Adviser on South-South Cooperation and Development Finance of the South Centre.

Viviana Muñoz Tellez is Programme Coordinator of the Health, Intellectual Property and Biodiversity (HIPB) Programme of the South Centre.

Vahini Naidu is Programme Coordinator of the Trade for Development Programme (TDP) of the South Centre.

Danish is Programme Officer of the Sustainable Development and Climate Change (SDCC) Programme of the South Centre.

Vitor Ido is former Programme Officer of the Health, Intellectual Property and Biodiversity (HIPB) Programme of the South Centre.

Peter Lunenborg is Senior Programme Officer of the Trade for Development Programme (TDP) of the South Centre.

Nirmalya Syam is Senior Programme Officer of the Health, Intellectual Property and Biodiversity (HIPB) Programme of the South Centre.

Daniel Uribe is Lead Programme Officer of the Sustainable Development and Climate Change (SDCC) Programme of the South Centre.

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Introduction

The concept of sustainable development has come a long way since it was first brought into the international spotlight by the World Commission on Environment and Development (Brundtland Commission) Report in 1987. Titled *Our Common Future*, the Commission's report listed poverty, growth, survival and the economic crisis as symptoms and causes requiring the creation of new approaches to the environment and development.

This concept continued to be further elaborated over the years, with a major milestone being the establishment of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). These were eight time-bound targets set by the international community that provided an important framework for countries to tackle a number of social and economic challenges for sustainable development and poverty reduction. Countries built on the momentum of largely achieving the MDGs, and came together once again in 2015 to establish the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

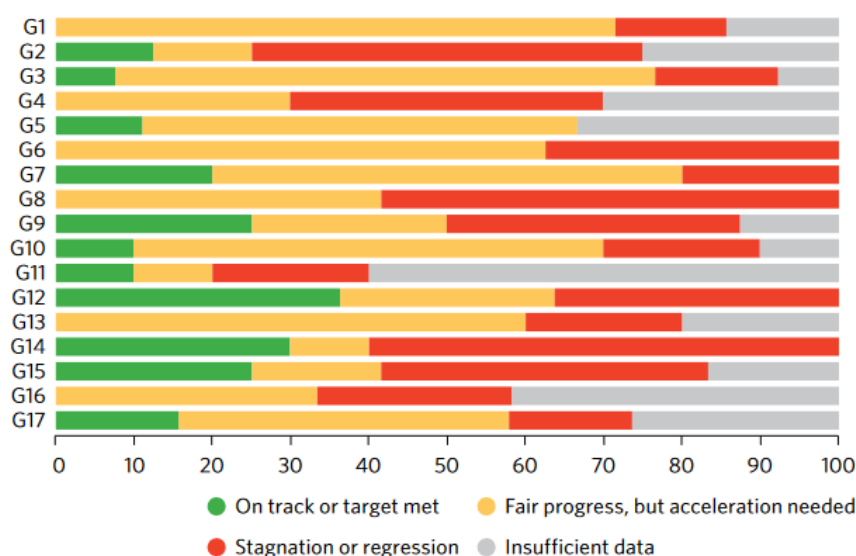
The SDGs are even more ambitious than the MDGs, covering 17 goals and 169 targets to be achieved by 2030. Some progress was made in implementing the SDGs between 2015 and the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic (see Figure 1), even though the progress was uneven and the trend for weakening multilateralism was on the rise. The pandemic and other parallel and multidimensional crises started subsequently halting and reversing the progress made. It has been a period of dramatic changes and setbacks for the 2030 Agenda.

It has been noted with deep concern that “without immediate course correction and acceleration of progress toward achieving the SDGs, our world is destined to face continued poverty, prolonged periods of crisis and growing uncertainty”¹. This has brought into sharp focus the need for creating national level policies that can restart and accelerate progress in achieving the SDGs. In addition, it is also essential that countries have the necessary policy space to take measures that support more equitable and inclusive societies.

¹ Political Declaration adopted at the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF) under the auspices of the United Nations General Assembly in September 2023, A/RES/78/1, para. 24.

Figure 1

Progress assessment for the 17 Goals based on assessed targets, 2023 or latest data (percentage)



Source: *The Sustainable Development Goals Report 2023*

Achievement of the SDGs is crucial for the Global South as it can reduce inequality, spur economic development, promote environmental sustainability, improve health and well-being, prioritize education, foster peace and justice, and emphasize global partnerships, including on a South-South basis. By addressing these key areas, the SDGs offer a comprehensive framework for developing and least developed countries to alleviate poverty and hunger, promote inclusive growth, and create a sustainable future for all.

The importance of achieving the SDGs was at the core of the 2023 SDG Summit, held on 18-19 September 2023, during the United Nations (UN) General Assembly. This Summit served as the second occasion, following the first SDG Summit in 2019 that Heads of State and Government met to review progress and accelerate the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs.

The achievement of the SDGs is in peril

At the midpoint of the 2030 Agenda, we are alarmed that the progress on most of the SDGs is either moving much too slowly or has regressed below the 2015 baseline. Our world is currently facing numerous crises. Years of sustainable development gains are being reversed. Millions of people have fallen into poverty, hunger and malnutrition are becoming more prevalent, humanitarian needs are rising, and the impacts of climate change more pronounced. This has led to increased inequality exacerbated by weakened international solidarity and a shortfall of trust to jointly overcome these crises.

- Political Declaration adopted at the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF) under the auspices of the General Assembly in September 2023, A/RES/78/1.

The ‘Summit of the Future’ is scheduled to take place on 22-23 September 2024², which seeks to reinvigorate the multilateral system to deliver the promises of the United Nations Charter and to accelerate the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and its SDGs. The Summit is also expected to provide concrete steps to respond to emerging challenges and opportunities, which will be included in a negotiated and action-oriented outcome document, called the ‘Pact for the Future’. The Pact will also include an annex on the ‘Global Digital Compact’³, which is expected to include shared principles for an open, free and secure digital future for all⁴.

In line with the focus of the work of the South Centre, this paper specifically looks at the following SDGs: Goal 1 - No poverty; Goal 2 - Zero Hunger; Goal 3 - Good Health and Well-being; Goal 9 - Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure; Goal 13 - Climate Action; Goal 14 - Life Below Water; Goal 15 - Life on Land; and Goal 17 - Partnerships for the Goals. Particular attention has also been paid to the concerns of least developed countries (LDCs) in relation to the SDGs.

The paper thus seeks to provide a review of the trajectory of the implementation of the aforementioned SDGs in the years since 2015 from the perspective of the Global South. It then spells out the drivers for the progress made and the challenges and the changing narratives in the world today. It also provides some concrete recommendations which can support developing and least developed countries in their sustainable development pathways.

² United Nations, “Summit of The Future”. Available from <https://www.un.org/en/summit-of-the-future>.

³ United Nations, "Global Digital Compact". Available from <https://www.un.org/techenvoy/global-digital-compact>.

⁴ Carlos Correa, Danish, Vitor Ido, Jacqueline Mwangi and Daniel Uribe, *The Global Digital Compact: opportunities and challenges for developing countries in a fragmented digital space*, Research Paper, No. 187 (Geneva, South Centre, 2023). Available from <https://www.southcentre.int/research-paper-187-4-december-2023/>.

SDG 1 – No Poverty

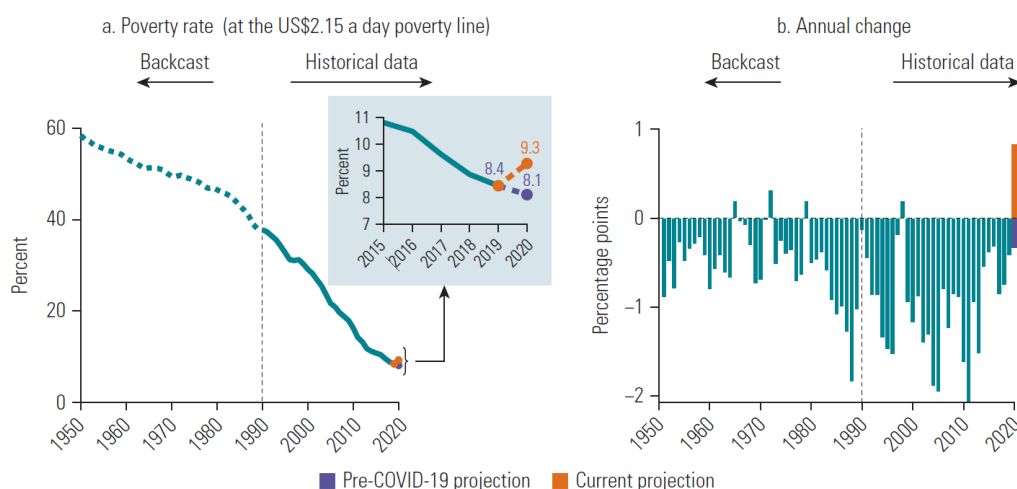
End poverty in all its forms everywhere

The ongoing global polycrises have produced a reversal in the progress towards poverty reduction, making the goal of ending extreme poverty by 2030 almost unachievable. Given the current trends, nearly 7 percent of the world's population, almost 574 million people, will still be living on less than US\$ 2.15 a day by 2030⁵, a reduction of less than 30% since the adoption of the SDGs in 2015⁶.

Poverty increased by a wide margin in 2020, but would have continued to decline had it not been for the pandemic (see Figure 2). Although the degree of poverty started to reduce again in 2021, to fully recover to the pre-pandemic trend of poverty reduction will take years. Other factors affecting developing countries such as rising food inflation, unemployment, limited access to finance and reduction in rural development have all increased barriers to poverty alleviation. Estimates show that “due to the economic shocks during 2020-2023, 165 million people fell into poverty using the \$3.65-a-day poverty line - the entirety of those living in low- and lower-middle-income economies”⁷.

Figure 2

The COVID-19 pandemic triggered a historic shock to global poverty



Source: World Bank⁸

Extreme poverty (defined as living on less than \$2.15 per person per day at 2017 purchasing power parity (PPP) terms) had significantly declined in recent decades, but COVID-19 reversed

⁵ World Bank, *Poverty and Shared Prosperity 2022: Correcting Course* (Washington, DC). doi:10.1596/978-1-4648-1893-6.

⁶ United Nations, "Goal 1: No Poverty," Sustainable Development Goals, United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs. Available from <https://sdgs.un.org/goals/goal1>.

⁷ Salome Ecker, George Gray Molina, Lars Jensen and Eduardo Ortiz-Juarez, “The Human Cost of Inaction: Poverty, Social Protection and Debt Servicing, 2020–2023”, Development Futures Series, United Nations Development Programme Global Policy Network Brief, July 2023. Available from <https://www.undp.org/publications/dfs-human-cost-inaction-poverty-social-protection-and-debt-servicing-2020-2023>.

⁸ World Bank, *Poverty and Shared Prosperity 2022*, p. 2.

this trend. The efforts made by developing countries in the fight against poverty have been negatively impacted in recent years. The limited fiscal policy space and high level of indebtedness that some developing countries face have increased their fiscal policies pressure, curtailing possibilities to take immediate responses to face external shocks and crises. The tightening of monetary policy in advanced economies has also led to a liquidity crunch and large financial outflows from developing countries, while those facing severe debt distress are being asked to take on fiscal austerity⁹, worsening the outlook for their populations¹⁰.

The magnitude of the economic scarring from these global crises for countries has been uneven, with more severe impacts in certain regions. For instance, in the African continent, “the disruptions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic pushed an estimated 55 million Africans into extreme poverty in 2020 and reversed more than two decades of progress in poverty reduction on the continent”¹¹. According to the International Monetary Fund (IMF), long-term economic stagnation will continue to severely affect countries in sub-Saharan Africa in the coming years¹².

However, even before the pandemic, the UN shows that “the pace of poverty reduction was slowing, with extreme poverty falling from 10.8 per cent in 2015 to 8.4 per cent in 2019”¹³. Efforts towards achieving the SDGs have been off-track, with 2018 baseline projections showing that 6 per cent of the world population will still be living in extreme poverty in 2030¹⁴. According to the World Bank, the “pandemic pushed about 70 million people into extreme poverty in 2020, the largest one-year increase since global poverty monitoring began in 1990”¹⁵. Optimistic estimates suggest that extreme poverty might *plausibly* be eradicated by 2050, a full two decades after the time horizon set by the SDGs¹⁶. This has brought into sharp focus the need for creating national level policies that will restart and accelerate progress in reducing poverty and stimulating economic growth.

⁹ Ahilan Kadirgamar, “IMF, Austerity and Social Protection”, *Daily Mirror*, 17 April 2023. Available from <https://www.dailymirror.lk/opinion/IMF-Austerity-and-Social-Protection/172-257659>.

¹⁰ H.T. Parekh, “IMF—Doubling the Dose of Austerity”, *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. 58, Issue No. 19, (13 May, 2023). Available from <https://www.epw.in/journal/2023/19/h-t-parekh-finance-column/imf%E2%80%94doubling-dose-austerity.html>.

¹¹ United Nations Economic Commission for Africa, *Economic Report on Africa 2021: Addressing poverty and vulnerability in Africa during the COVID-19 pandemic* (Addis Ababa, 2022). Available from <https://www.uneca.org/era2021>.

¹² See: International Monetary Fund, “Regional Economic Outlook: Sub-Saharan Africa” (April 2022) in <https://www.imf.org/en/Publications/REO/SSA/Issues/2022/04/28/regional-economic-outlook-for-sub-saharan-africa-april-2022>.

¹³ United Nations, *The Sustainable Development Goals Report 2023* (New York), p. 12.

¹⁴ United Nations, *Secretary-General Report on SDG Progress, 2019* (New York). Available from https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/24978Report_of_the_SG_on_SDG_Progress_2019.pdf.

¹⁵ World Bank, “Global Progress in Reducing Extreme Poverty Grinds to a Halt”, Press Release, 5 October 2022. Available from <https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/press-release/2022/10/05/global-progress-in-reducing-extreme-poverty-grinds-to-a-halt>.

¹⁶ Charles Kenny and Zack Gehan, “Scenarios for Future Global Growth to 2050,” Working Paper 634 (Washington, DC, Center for Global Development, 2023). Available from <https://www.cgdev.org/publication/scenarios-future-global-growth-2050>.

There have also been significant additional impacts of rising poverty on rural areas and communities, with rural poverty increasing substantially in recent years¹⁷. This has massive implications for poverty alleviation as “almost 84 percent of poor people live in rural areas, and rural poverty dominates in every world region”, thus making the rural populations more vulnerable to external shocks and liable to be pushed into extreme poverty¹⁸.

Efforts to mitigate the negative impacts of the pandemic, such as the use of direct cash transfers to citizens was adopted by many governments. Other initiatives have included debt moratoriums, wage subsidies and other social security benefits. As one report notes, “over 1,400 social protection measures have been adopted by 208 jurisdictions to cushion the shock. While a remarkable number in itself, the intended beneficiaries of these schemes must often face systemic obstacle courses to access them.”¹⁹

Without adequate access to social security measures, many poor people find themselves hostage to precarity and stuck in the poverty trap. Access to basic services such as water, food, electricity and energy, shelter, sanitation and health, and education continues to be a challenge in many developing countries, which has direct linkage with their rate of poverty eradication²⁰. For instance, many households fall back into extreme poverty due to out-of-pocket expenditure on healthcare, and not having adequate access to public health facilities. As a World Health Organization (WHO)-World Bank (WB) report points out, “the rate of increase in the incidence of catastrophic health spending between 2015 and 2017 was similar to the pace of change over the previous 15 years (on average, by 0.2 percentage points per year). In high-income countries the increase accelerated; and for the first time it increased in low-income countries”²¹.

The ongoing restructuring in global supply chains is also likely to affect poverty alleviation efforts. A World Bank report highlights that the scenario where “[a] “hostile” environment with a shift toward global reshoring could drive an additional 51.8 million people into extreme poverty, whereas a more “friendly” one could lift 21.5 million additional people out of poverty by 2030 relative to the baseline”²².

¹⁷ Yuefen Li, Daniel Uribe and Danish, “Leveraging South-South and Triangular Cooperation for Reducing Poverty and Hunger, and Promoting Rural Development”, Policy Brief, No. 118 (Geneva, South Centre, 2023). Available from <https://www.southcentre.int/policy-brief-118-21-april-2023/>.

¹⁸ United Nations Development Programme and Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative, *Global Multidimensional Poverty Index 2023*, p. 9.

¹⁹ Special Rapporteur on extreme poverty and human rights, “Looking back to look ahead: A rights-based approach to social protection in the post-COVID-19 economic recovery”, United Nations Human Rights Special Procedures, 11 September 2020. Available from <https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/Documents/Issues/Poverty/covid19.pdf>.

²⁰ M. Shrestha, “Access to Basic Services and Its Linkage with Ending Poverty”, in *No Poverty. Encyclopedia of the UN Sustainable Development Goals*, Leal Filho, W., Azul, A.M., Brandli, L., Lange Salvia, A., Özuyar, P.G., Wall, T., eds. (Springer, Cham., 2021). Available from https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-95714-2_1.

²¹ World Health Organization and International Bank for Reconstruction and Development / The World Bank, *Tracking Universal Health Coverage: 2021 global monitoring report* (Geneva 2021), p. 24. Available from <https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/9789240040618>.

²² Paul Brenton, Michael J. Ferrantino, and Maryla Maliszewska, *Reshaping Global Value Chains in Light of COVID-19: Implications for Trade and Poverty Reduction in Developing Countries* (Washington, DC, World Bank, 2022). doi:10.1596/978-1-4648-1821-9. Available from <https://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/trade/publication/global-value-chains-in-light-of-covid-19-trade-development-climate-change>.

However, systemic barriers continue to persist for the Global South in many areas, leaving them with impossible choices. For example, “at least 19 developing countries are spending more on interest than on education and 45 are spending more on interest than on health. In total, 48 countries are home to 3.3 billion people, whose lives are directly affected by underinvestment in education or health due to large interest payment burdens”²³.

Recommendations:

Bringing poverty alleviation back on track requires a renewed and enhanced effort to unlock finance for poverty reduction initiatives. It has been estimated that “it would cost little more than US\$14 billion, which is approximately 0.009 percent of the global GDP in 2022, to mitigate the current surge of poverty and lift out of poverty the 165 million people living on less than \$3.65 a day”²⁴.

Investing in the health, education and productivity of peoples and communities needs to become a top priority for alleviating poverty, through efforts including the creation of decent jobs and livelihood opportunities, enhancing available social safety nets and expanding access to financial services, including savings, sources of credit and insurance for vulnerable households and those living in poverty.

Providing more fiscal space for covering essential services in countries remains important as a key policy tool for poverty alleviation. For this to be effective, developing countries also need to be provided with sufficient debt relief, and their efforts to mobilize resources from both domestic and foreign sources for poverty reduction initiatives need further support from the international community.

²³ United Nations Global Crisis Response Group, *A World of Debt*, July 2023, p. 14. Available from https://news.un.org/pages/wp-content/uploads/2023/07/2023_07-A-WORLD-OF-DEBT-JULY_FINAL.pdf

²⁴ United Nations Development Programme, “165 million people fell into poverty between 2020 to 2023 as debt servicing crowded out social protection, health and education expenditures”, 14 July 2023. Available from <https://www.undp.org/press-releases/165-million-people-fell-poverty-between-2020-2023-debt-servicing-crowded-out-social-protection-health-and-education-expenditures>.

SDG 2 – Zero Hunger

End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture

Global hunger is still far above pre-COVID-19 pandemic levels, affecting around 9.2 percent of the world population in 2022 compared with 7.9 percent in 2019²⁵, implying an increase of over 100 million more people facing hunger than before the global pandemic. It is estimated that between 691 and 783 million people in the world faced hunger in 2022, two-thirds of whom are women and 80 percent of whom live in areas prone to climate change²⁶. However, the greatest increase in hunger has been in the Gaza strip, where the whole population of around 2.2 million is facing catastrophic hunger and high levels of acute food insecurity²⁷, while an entirely man-made famine can arrive anytime before May 2024²⁸.

In parallel, undernourishment and malnutrition have been on the rise (see Figure 3), with projections that almost 600 million people will be chronically undernourished in 2030²⁹. Its impacts are particularly felt among children, with data showing that “148.1 million children under 5 suffered from stunting in 2022, accounting for more than one out of every five children in this vulnerable age group worldwide”³⁰, with the highest numbers being seen in South Asia and sub-Saharan Africa regions. The situation is again the most dire in the Gaza strip, where before the outbreak of war, “0.8 percent of children under the age of 5 were acutely malnourished, [while] as of February 2024, that figure is between 12.4 and 16.5 percent”³¹.

²⁵ FAO, IFAD, UNICEF, WFP and WHO, *The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World 2023: Urbanization, agrifood systems transformation and healthy diets across the rural–urban continuum* (Rome). Available from <https://doi.org/10.4060/cc3017en>.

²⁶ Hanna Duggal and Mariam Ali, “Why do more than 800 million people live in hunger?”, *Al Jazeera*, 28 May 2023. Available from <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2023/5/28/why-is-global-hunger-on-the-rise-2>.

²⁷ Integrated Food Security Phase Classification, “Gaza Strip: Acute Food Insecurity Situation for 15 February - 15 March 2024 and Projection for 16 March - 15 July 2024”. Available from <https://www.ipcinfo.org/ipc-country-analysis/details-map/en/c/1156872/?iso3=PSE>.

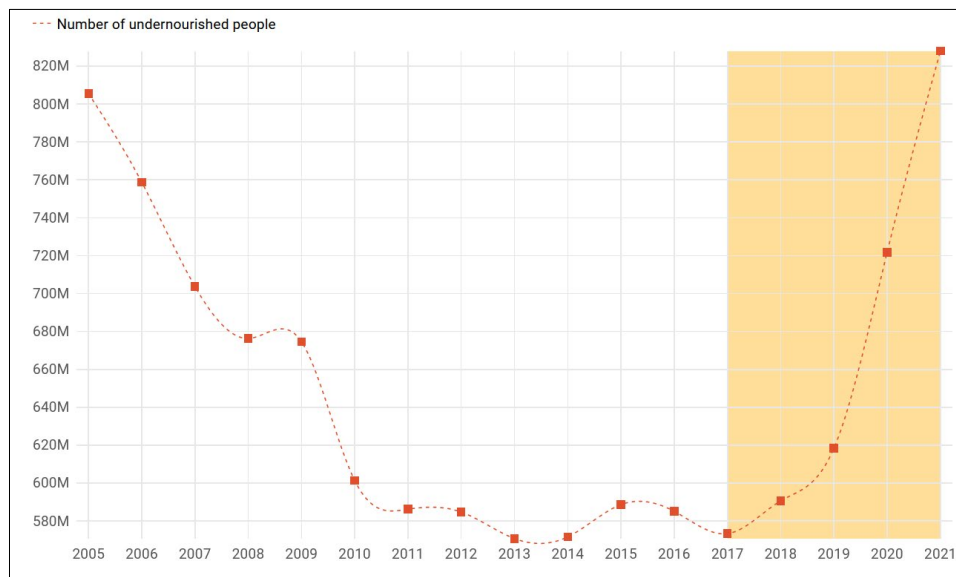
²⁸ United Nations, “Famine Imminent in Gaza, Humanitarian Officials Tell Security Council, Calling for Immediate Ceasefire”, SC/15604, 27 February 2024. Available from <https://press.un.org/en/2024/sc15604.doc.htm>.

²⁹ FAO et al., *The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World 2023*.

³⁰ Meera Shekar and Chiara Dell’Aira, “New data exposes alarming child malnutrition trends”, World Bank Blog, 15 June 2023. Available from <https://blogs.worldbank.org/health/new-data-exposes-alarming-child-malnutrition-trends>.

³¹ Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC), “Gaza Strip: Famine is imminent as 1.1 million people, half of Gaza, experience catastrophic food insecurity”, Global Initiative - Special Brief, 18 March 2024. Available from <https://www.ipcinfo.org/ipcinfo-website/alerts-archive/issue-97/en/>.

Figure 3 - Global Malnutrition



Source: Al Jazeera, based on FAO

Global food insecurity has also been increasing since 2018, and it rose even more sharply following the COVID-19 pandemic and the conflict in Ukraine³². Data shows that “the number of people experiencing acute food insecurity and requiring urgent food, nutrition and livelihood assistance increased for the fourth consecutive year in 2022, with over a quarter of a billion facing acute hunger and people in seven countries on the brink of starvation”³³. In 2022, 258 million people in 58 countries faced high levels of acute food insecurity³⁴.

The situation is particularly bleak in some African nations, where hunger has been on the rise since 2010, with the sharpest increase seen in 2020, and now witnessing the “worst food crisis ever recorded”³⁵. In 2022 alone, the prevalence of undernourishment in all sub-regions of Africa rose “from 19.4 percent in 2021 to 19.7 percent – the equivalent of 11 million more people in one year”³⁶. The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) also estimates that in Africa, “[r]oughly 146 million people are suffering from acute food insecurity and require urgent humanitarian assistance”³⁷.

In Latin America and the Caribbean, “despite policies supporting income and food, the incidence of the moderate or severe food insecurity increased 6.5 percentage points in relation

³² Björn Rother, Sebastian Sosa, Lukas Kohler, Gaelle Pierre, and others, “Tackling the Global Food Crisis: Impact, Policy Response, and the Role of the IMF”, IMF Note 2022/004 (Washington, D.C., International Monetary Fund, 2022).

³³ Food Security Information Network and Global Network Against Food Crises, *Global Report on Food Crises (GRFC) 2023* (Rome).

³⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁵ Joe Bavier, Abdi Sheikh, Michael Ovaska and Aditi Bhandari, “Africa’s food crisis is the biggest yet – five reasons why”, *Reuters*, 14 December 2022. Available from <https://www.reuters.com/graphics/AFRICA-HUNGER/lgpdcknwlvo/>.

³⁶ FAO et al., *The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World 2023*, p. 8.

³⁷ International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, “Africa: Hunger Crisis”, Emergency Appeal No. MGR60001, launched 6 October 2022. Available from <https://www.ifrc.org/emergency/africa-hunger-crisis>.

to 2019. The food crisis has been particularly severe in some countries in the region: for example, in Guatemala, Honduras and several countries in the Caribbean the effects of the pandemic have been aggravated by concurrent natural disasters”³⁸.

Similarly, for the Asia-Pacific region, the pandemic “worsened forms of poverty beyond income, such as food insecurity and inadequate access to health services and education”³⁹. The World Food Programme (WFP) also notes that, “Food insecurity in the region has drastically increased since 2019. Before the COVID-19 pandemic, it was estimated that 27.6 million people were acutely food-insecure in the region. This number jumped to 62.1 million at the end of 2021, driven by the socioeconomic impacts of the pandemic, political instability, and extreme weather events”⁴⁰.

Causes such as conflict, climate change, economic downturns, and growing inequality – often occurring in combination, all contribute to increasing global hunger and malnutrition. For instance, the IFRC states that “the current factors creating pressures on food systems in Africa and driving the hunger crisis are multifaceted, interrelated, and frequently mutually reinforcing, namely, conflict and insecurity, economic slowdowns and downturns resulting in inflation in consumer prices (particularly food and energy), and weather extremes and climate variability”⁴¹ (see Figure 4).

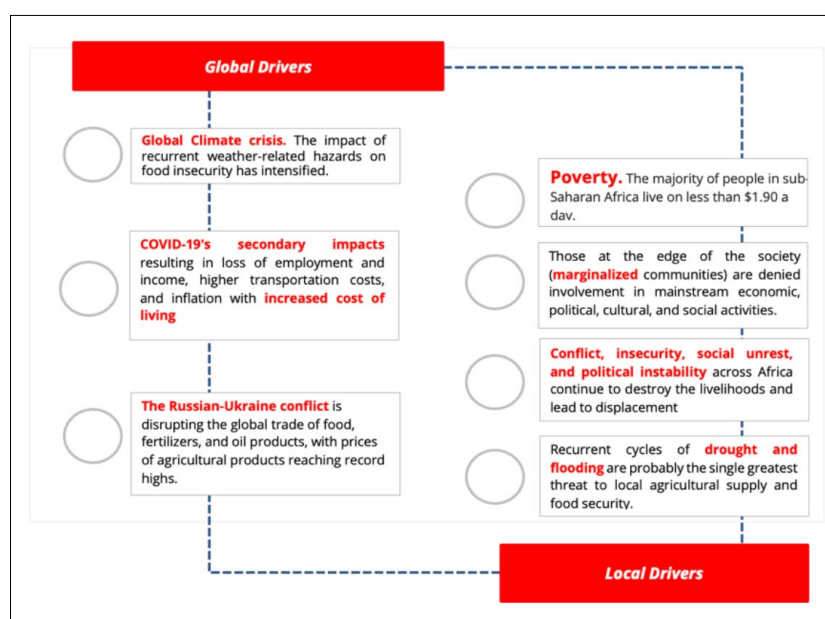
³⁸ United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean *et al.*, *The Outlook for Agriculture and Rural Development in the Americas: A Perspective on Latin America and the Caribbean 2021-2022* (San Jose, Costa Rica, 2021). Available from https://repositorio.cepal.org/bitstream/handle/11362/47209/1/ECLAC-FAO21-22_en.pdf.

³⁹ Asian Development Bank, “Pandemic Sets Back Fight Against Poverty in Asia by At Least 2 Years, Has Likely Hurt Social Mobility”, News Release, 24 August 2022. Available from <https://www.adb.org/news/pandemic-sets-back-fight-against-poverty-asia-least-2-years-has-likely-hurt-social-mobility>.

⁴⁰ World Food Programme, *The Global Food Crisis: Impact on the Asia Pacific Region*, 30 January 2023, p. 12. Available from <https://www.wfp.org/publications/global-food-crisis-impact-asia-pacific-region>.

⁴¹ International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, “Africa: Hunger Crisis”, Emergency Appeal No. MGR60001, launched 6 October 2022. Available from <https://www.ifrc.org/emergency/africa-hunger-crisis>.

Figure 4



Source: IFRC

Inflationary pressures are still being seen in many countries, which are driving hunger and adding to increasing malnutrition⁴². Domestic food price inflation remains high across the world, generally exceeding overall inflation⁴³. With the ability of households to purchase adequate and nutritious food being reduced, the levels of malnutrition, particularly in women and children will rise, with lifelong consequences for the latter⁴⁴.

The rising geo-political tensions are also lending to fears around food security, given its close nexus with conflict. In this context, it has been emphasised that, “Protracted conflict, local insecurity and violence disrupt agricultural production and threaten livelihoods, accentuating negative coping strategies and deepening vulnerability to shocks. On average, there are 2.5–3 times more undernourished people living in low-income countries with a protracted crisis than in other low-income countries”⁴⁵.

Despite the rise in the price of food and agricultural commodities, the benefits have not been reflected as increased rural incomes. Accompanying increases in input costs such as for fuel and fertilizer have hampered agricultural productivity. Climate change induced extreme weather, including droughts, flash floods and extreme heat, has also played a role in reducing

⁴² Siobhan McDonough, “Yet another inflation problem: Food prices are driving up world hunger”, *Vox*, 7 September 2022. Available from <https://www.vox.com/future-perfect/2022/9/7/23340896/inflation-world-hunger-food-security-world-bank>.

⁴³ World Bank, “Food Security Update”, 13 July 2023. Available from <https://thedocs.worldbank.org/en/doc/40ebbf38f5a6b68bfc11e5273e1405d4-0090012022/related/Food-Security-Update-LXXXIX-July-13-2023.pdf>.

⁴⁴ Derek Headey and Marie Ruel, “The global food price crisis threatens to cause a global nutrition crisis: New evidence from 1.27 million young children on the effects of inflation”, International Food Policy Research Institute, 14 December 2022. Available from <https://www.ifpri.org/blog/global-food-price-crisis-threatens-cause-global-nutrition-crisis-new-evidence-127-million>.

⁴⁵ Report of the Special Rapporteur on the right to food, Critical perspective on food systems, food crises and the future of the right to food, A/HRC/43/44, 21 January 2020, para. 44.

agricultural outputs across many countries. Such loss in agricultural productivity growth is “substantially more severe (a reduction of ~26–34%) in warmer regions such as Africa and Latin America and the Caribbean”⁴⁶.

Combating this requires the creation of sustainable food production systems, implementing climate resilient agricultural practices, and making use of traditional knowledge, which can help transform rural communities and the lives of peasants and other people working in rural areas⁴⁷. Promoting the cultivation and use of ‘ancient grains’ such as millets, which are hardy and climate resilient can help reduce both climate vulnerabilities and malnutrition⁴⁸. Furthermore, initiatives to increase investment in rural areas, protect the natural environment, removal of trade distorting agricultural export subsidies, and transfer of clean and sustainable agricultural technologies are important in this regard⁴⁹.

Progress in SDG 2 requires significant resources being provided to transform food systems, ensure food security and invest in sustainable agricultural practices⁵⁰. The UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Food has highlighted that “donor States should spend an additional \$14 billion a year on average until 2030 to end hunger, double the incomes of 545 million small-scale farmers and limit agricultural emissions in line with the Paris Agreement on climate change. That would mean roughly doubling the amount of aid allocated to food security and nutrition each year, which would also need to be accompanied by an additional \$19 billion a year from the budgets of low- and middle-income countries.”⁵¹ In addition, taking steps towards fulfilling human rights, especially the right to food and right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment, can also help support countries’ efforts to end hunger and achieve food security⁵².

The SDG report 2023 has found that food insecurity is increasing and that investment in agriculture is declining except in Europe and North America. Developing countries need to produce more food not less and should be allowed to provide market price support to the extent necessary to provide food security to their populations. However, at the World Trade Organization (WTO), developed countries remain reluctant to discipline their trade-distorting

⁴⁶ A. Ortiz-Bobea, T.R. Ault, C.M. Carrillo, *et al.*, “Anthropogenic climate change has slowed global agricultural productivity growth”, *Nature Climate Change*, 11, 306–312 (2021). Available from <https://doi.org/10.1038/s41558-021-01000-1>.

⁴⁷ Danish, “Human Rights Council Side Event: The Rights of Peasants and Rural Workers in times of multiple crises held in Geneva”, *Defending Peasants’ Rights*, 19 April 2023. Available from <https://defendingpeasantsrights.org/en/human-rights-council-side-event-the-rights-of-peasants-and-rural-workers-in-times-of-multiple-crises-held-in-geneva/>.

⁴⁸ M. Majzoobi, S. Jafarzadeh, S. Teimouri, M. Ghasemlou, M. Hadidi, C.S. Brennan, “The Role of Ancient Grains in Alleviating Hunger and Malnutrition” *Foods*, 2023, 12(11), 2213. Available from <https://doi.org/10.3390/foods12112213>.

⁴⁹ See: United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, *Reconsidering Rural Development*, World Social Report 2021.

⁵⁰ United Nations, “Goal 2: Zero Hunger”, Sustainable Development Goals, United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs. Available from <https://sdgs.un.org/goals/goal2>.

⁵¹ Interim report of the Special Rapporteur on the right to food, The right to food and the coronavirus disease pandemic, A/77/177, 18 July 2022, para. 48.

⁵² Danish and Daniel Uribe, “Strengthening efforts towards fulfilling the human right to food and the right to clean, safe and healthy environment”, Policy Brief, No. 119 (Geneva, South Centre, 2023). Available from <https://www.southcentre.int/policy-brief-119-23-june-2023/>.

subsidies that impact on the capacity of developing countries to produce, and to level the playing field compared to developing countries.

Recommendations:

WTO Member States should commit to work towards fulfilling the WTO mandates on reforming trade-distorting farm subsidies, and adopting a permanent solution on public stockholding programmes amongst others. These outcomes will contribute towards the achievement of SDG 2 to end hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture, SDG 12 to ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns; and are a step closer to concluding the WTO negotiations under the Doha Development Agenda (SDG 17.10).

SDG 3 – Good Health and Well-Being

Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages

The achievement of SDG 3 indicators is linked to the achievement of other SDGs, because of many factors affecting peoples' health and livelihoods.

Progress on health has seen a reversal with the COVID-19 pandemic. The World Health Organization (WHO) estimates that the excess mortality globally was 14.9 million excess deaths attributed to the COVID-19 pandemic by the end of 2021.⁵³ This is a result from the direct health impact of the pandemic, as well as indirect impact from reduced access to health services. The pandemic overall affected negatively the livelihoods of millions of people in developing countries from reduced household income with the loss of work from lockdowns and to care for family members. The COVID-19 pandemic also exposed and widened pre-existing inequalities both between and within countries. The gross inequity in access to COVID-19 vaccines in 2020-2021 showed the lack of global coordination and solidarity to address the global pandemic threat in a timely manner.

In addition to the dire impact of COVID-19, many SDG 3 indicators were already off track since 2015. According to WHO statistics,⁵⁴ progress has stalled in areas such as maternal mortality ratio, under-five and neonatal mortality rates, premature mortality from major non communicable diseases, immunization coverage, incidence of malaria and tuberculosis, treatment for neglected tropical diseases, and access to essential health services. Worryingly, despite the emphasis of the SDG 3 on achieving Universal Health Coverage, no progress has been made on reducing people's financial hardship due to health-care costs. Out of pocket expenditure for essential health services and medicines remains significant in many countries, with a disproportionate impact on poor households.

Below is a summary of some of the current status of SDG 3 indicators, according to WHO data:

- Global maternal mortality ratio plummeted to -0.04% (UI: -1.6–1.1%) between 2016 and 2020, indicating stagnation. Africa continued to have the highest maternal mortality ratio.
- Global decline in child mortality slowed down, to 2.2% during the period of 2010–2021. Africa continues to have the highest child mortality ratio.
- Non-communicable diseases, such as cardiovascular disease, cancer, chronic respiratory disease and diabetes, cause the highest disease burden worldwide, and progress to reduce their incidence has slowed since 2015.
- Tuberculosis (TB) was the top cause of death from a single infectious agent worldwide, prior to COVID-19. The net reduction of the TB incidence rate from 2015 to 2021 was 10%, only one-fifth of the way to the 2025 milestone of WHO's End TB Strategy.
- The proportion of the population spending more than 10% of their household budget on health out of pocket (OOP) (SDG 3.8.2) has worsened since 2015 at an average of

⁵³ See: World Health Organization, *World Health Statistics 2023: Monitoring Health for the SDGs* (Geneva, 2023), p. 18. Available from <https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/9789240074323>.

⁵⁴ See: World Health Organization, *World Health Statistics 2023*.

0.2 percentage points per year to reach 13.5% in 2019 (about 1 billion people). There has been no significant progress in reducing financial hardship.

- There are no statistics provided to assess progress on target on increased access to immunization and access to medicines including by the use of the flexibilities in the Agreement on Trade Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS) to tackle high prices and promote generic competition. Developing countries continue to receive pressure including through free trade agreements to not use. The WTO could not agree to waive intellectual property rights (IPR) protections during the COVID-19 pandemic as requested by developing countries, with only a limited waiver agreed for COVID-19 vaccines that came too late to have any impact.

Recommendations:

SDG 3 implementation requires increased focus on policies and investments towards ensuring equitable access to essential health services and to essential medicines, vaccines, and diagnostics. High market prices inhibit the ability of governments to procure essential medical products for all.

Public financing for public health must be viewed as an investment that supports overall social and economic development, and progress towards a more just society where all can live in good health.

More global efforts need to be put towards controlling the marketing, lobbying and other practices of for-profit firms on products that have a negative effect on health, such as tobacco and alcohol. More stringent policies and guidance needs to be developed to regulate these sectors as well as the pharmaceutical industry, to prevent conflict of interests and overmedicalization.

Global solidarity is needed to reduce the debt burden on developing countries to free up resources that can be invested into strengthening national health systems.

Pandemic prevention, preparedness and response requires increasing all countries' capacities, through increased global coordination, collaboration and solidarity, including in the form of equitable governance and financing. The response to the COVID-19 pandemic was disastrous, with rich countries hoarding vaccine doses, vaccine manufacturers putting profits over lives, and a dysfunctional ad-hoc mechanism that could not deliver on the aim of providing timely access to vaccines and treatments for most of the world.

The inequity in access to vaccines and treatments for the COVID-19 pandemic evidenced the need for countries to increase their research and development and manufacturing capacities. Global mechanisms and policies to support rapid transfer of technology and know-how are necessary.

Governments should reform their intellectual property laws to be supportive of public health goals. Pharmaceutical firms are employing strategies for the protection of patents and other

intellectual property rights and pressuring governments to be lax in the grant of patents. The effect is high prices for medical products, by reducing generic competition.

Health inequities must be tackled, among countries, and within countries. The causes of such inequities should be addressed at the level of public health policy, to provide equitable access to health services -including primary health care-, and medical products and support the vulnerable populations. The root causes of inequities also must be addressed, which include transformations in the economic and social systems.

Developed countries must live up to the promise of financing for climate change mitigation and towards facilitating adaptation in developing countries. Health will be increasingly affected by climate change. Moreover, more resources need to be made available to developing countries to address the health effects of the escalating climate crisis.

Drug resistant infections are on the rise. Countries must increase efforts to improve access to - and optimize the use of- antimicrobials including antibiotics. Reporting on the two antimicrobial resistance (AMR) indicators (3.d.2 & 3.d.3) has been low. New targets should be considered, as will be discussed in the upcoming High Level Meeting on AMR in 2024. These should include increasing the use of antibiotics in the “Access” group (of the WHO AWaRe classification), which include antibiotics recommended as first- and second-line therapy for common infectious disease, as compared to antibiotics in the “watch” and “reserve” groups. Only 19 countries reported data on these indicators.

There is need for a new WHO pandemic treaty to assure timely and affordable access to vaccines, diagnostics, medicines and other health products and surge financing in pandemic times.

SDG 9 - Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure

Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation

SDG 9 is directly associated to industrial policies (including ‘catching-up’), just transitions (including possible decarbonization), the promotion of innovation (including research and development (R&D) and avoiding barriers to technology transfer), and the development of general, information and communication technologies (ICT) and high-technology infrastructure. Most of the assessments concerning this SDG are based on statistics on manufacturing and infrastructure but fail to reflect some of the main elements that prevent developing countries and LDCs from achieving such goals. Among these, the following can be highlighted:

- i. the negative impact of intellectual property (IP) in allowing access to knowledge and enabling technology transfer, given that their primary role is to grant exclusivity rights to private entities mostly based in the Global North. Without a change in IP rules, the efforts to enhance R&D and innovation in developing countries and LDCs will continue to be severely hampered;
- ii. the lack of compensation, flexibility and support to developing countries towards adopting more sustainable manufacturing practices, while requiring them to promptly implement measures which developed countries have historically not implemented in their own industrialization and development paths. This leaves little room for the Global South to proceed with a just transition that also attends to their current developmental needs;
- iii. a lack of clear support to industrial policies which are related to the international investment, fiscal, monetary and debt regimes (which drastically limit the investment capacity of developing countries and LDCs, not to mention their dependency), apart from a view which focuses exclusively on a private sector-led innovation system (including via the protection of IP). Both infrastructure, innovation and industry manufacturing are impeded from being upgraded under the existing structural conditions;
- iv. the policy tools that were available to developed countries to industrialise and change the structure of their economies are no longer available to developing countries (e.g., local content prohibitions, subsidy prohibitions for industrial development, tariff reforms, etc.). This is a result of WTO rules that have constrained developing countries’ ability to pursue development and industrialisation objectives and contributed towards entrenched imbalances in the global economy.

To exemplify this, the UN notes with respect to Target 9.b of the SDGs that:

“Target 9.b: In 2022, the medium-high and high-technology industries experienced solid growth, mainly due to the recovery in the automotive sector and consistently strong production in sectors such as computers, electronics and optical products, and electrical equipment. However, the production of basic pharmaceuticals declined due to the COVID-19 situation and shortages of essential inputs. In 2020, sub-Saharan Africa and LDCs had low shares of

medium-high and high-technology manufacturing, at 21.7% and 10.6% respectively, compared to 47.7% in Europe and Northern America and 47.1% in Eastern Asia.”⁵⁵

In addition, it notes that, “The manufacturing industry’s recovery from COVID-19 remains incomplete and uneven: some high-income regions achieved record-high manufacturing value added per capita in 2022 but levels in LDCs were not much higher than the 2015 baseline. In the aftermath of the pandemic, data show that higher-technology industries recovered faster and proved to be more resilient, pointing to the need to promote innovation and technology transfer in a way that benefits all countries. To achieve Goal 9 by 2030 it is essential to support LDCs, invest in advanced technologies, lower carbon emissions, and increase global mobile broadband access.”

As noted above, the COVID-19 pandemic severely undermined industrialization and innovation efforts in developing countries and LDCs, and equally impeded the upscaling of infrastructure (potentially with a partial and very limited exception to manufacturing capacity for pharmaceuticals in a few countries). The debt crisis in most developing countries also largely prevents the undertaking of successful industry and innovation policies. The strong rebound and uptake in medium-high and high-technology industries is for the most part beneficial to developed countries; the recovery in the automotive sector is also, at least to a certain extent, incompatible with the other targets which aim and demand developing countries to proceed to a green transition. Meanwhile, the baseline of manufacturing in LDCs remains largely unchanged since 2015 and although there is reference to the need for more technology transfer, the structural causes for this not to take place are not addressed. The TRIPS Agreement of the WTO has promised such technology transfer but actually constrained countries in their innovation policies; contemporarily, the policies to incentivize green innovation are largely supporting entities in developed countries and whose equivalents in developing countries and LDCs (with much less sophisticated innovation ecosystems, including in terms of infrastructure) simply cannot compete.

To describe one paradigmatic example in that respect, the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO), a specialized UN agency, considers that Goal 9 is at the core of its mandate and activities. At WIPO, developing countries continue to be underrepresented at its governance bodies and development and SDG-related issues are largely disregarded. The WIPO regularly reports on how it implements SDGs but without clarity as to how exactly its activities are conducive (and not inhibitors) of industry, innovation, and infrastructure.

In addition, WIPO’s own self-analysis and reporting on SDGs creates an automatic relation between IP protection (and the administering of international IP systems such as those hosted by WIPO) and the fulfilment of various SDGs (including health and gender equality), notably SDG 9. This is however a drastic misrepresentation of the issue. For one, the interplay between IP protection and SDGs is nor automatic nor a causal relation; in fact, in many instances, IP undermines the fulfilment of SDGs (for example, by creating barriers to health technologies and therefore undermining access to them, particularly in developing countries).

⁵⁵ United Nations, "Goal 9: Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure", Sustainable Development Goals, United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs. Available from <https://sdgs.un.org/goals/goal9>.

In addition, the continued and steady rise in the number of patent applications, particularly in developed countries and China, should not be seen as synonymous with more innovation. More patent applications and more patents being granted do not mean that more innovation is taking place – it often means a lower, lax standard of patentability which renders the obtention of patent rights easier, and most patents are not commercially viable or representative of real innovation capacity anyway. However, the framing of IP as conducive to innovation (a questionable assertion) has been used to legitimize any of WIPO's activities with respect to SDG 9.

The creation of resilient and 'environmentally friendly' industries is directly related to access to new technologies and environmentally sound technologies. There is little transfer of technology to developing countries and LDCs, and green innovation ecosystems cannot be created out of a sudden, nor can it be expected that existing manufacturing and industry facilities and processes be transformed into greener versions in a short time. But these calls are often ignored in the context of WIPO's efforts, which focus on promoting more patents on green technologies and mediate the potential encounter of providers and recipients of these technologies via a 'marketplace' platform hosted by WIPO and known as WIPO Green. All efforts on technology transfer to green technologies at the organizations are brought to this limited system, rather than providing ideas on how countries can enhance access to technologies such as via the use of compulsory licensing for green tech or further making use of research-oriented copyright exceptions and limitations to allow researchers to use all available materials to innovate in green areas. Meanwhile, substantive discussions on the very same issue are for the most part blocked at the WTO.

Infrastructure development in developing countries and LDCs require structural changes and investments which only a handful of countries are capable of funding. Traditional sources for infrastructure often require a set of obligations in the receiving countries (including fiscal ones) and many development and infrastructure banks are not sufficient to counter massive infrastructure disparities in developing countries and especially in LDCs. Private investment has also proven insufficient to provide such incentives. All these elements must be reflected in the assessment of SDG 9, as to complexify the current approach.

Finally, the Global South is often promised to accrue the benefits of new technologies (such as artificial intelligence – AI, big data, and machine learning), potentially allowing them to leapfrog towards a technology-intensive and innovation-intensive economy (without the need of 'conventional' manufacturing). In reality, developing countries and LDCs are facing the risks of data colonialism and extraction of data of its countries and populations without adequate or any forms of compensation/benefit-sharing, the inability to benefit from the potentials of such technologies due to lack of access to such technologies (and often expensive licensing which creates further dependency), and a major mismatch between promises and realities. Such broader discussions often reflect priorities of developed countries rather than the reality of developing countries and LDCs (such as lack of connectivity, digital literacy, and other broad infrastructural pitfalls), and the Global South is unable to partake in most ongoing regulatory debates – often needing to replicate the regulatory standards previously adopted by developed countries.

With respect to target 9.c (significantly increase access to information and communications technology and strive to provide universal and affordable access to the Internet in least developed countries by 2020), although efforts to maximize ICT in developing countries and LDCs can be identified, and that Internet connectivity has marginally improved since 2015, the target is still largely unfulfilled. At the same time, the quality of access to connectivity (i.e., what kind of connectivity? What is the average speed and reliability for companies and individuals to use the Internet? Is this access affordable?) is a core element of such assessment which should not be left unanalyzed. In addition, the recent discussions governing platforms such as but not restricted to the ongoing process at the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)⁵⁶ highlight that regulation (not censorship), liability and digital literacy are core issues associated to connectivity. Even if this cannot be directly measured and captured by the SDG 9 targets, these issues should be brought to the attention of the UN and the implementation of SDGs more generally.

Recommendations:

Developing countries and LDCs have been promised technology transfer, leapfrogging to a technology-intensive economy, and the benefits of new ‘disruptive’ technologies, which would all contribute to SDG 9’s implementation. In addition, they have been demanded to proceed towards a greener economy without sufficient support (financially, technically) nor equity, preventing a real just transition. The COVID-19 pandemic’s outcomes on SDG 9 highlight that recovery was possible in high-income countries, precisely in areas where manufacturing is not necessarily sustainable, and also where innovation ecosystems are more robust, but not in developing countries and LDCs, which are constrained in their financial capacities, need to catch-up extensively, and are further limited by the protection of intellectual property and little to no technology transfer.

Among various possible recommendations and areas to further explore, the following issues can be highlighted:

- Mission-oriented innovation policies, which includes public investments and a well-regulated private investment, all mediated and organized by States, should be promoted;
- Industrial policies need to be fostered and supported, particularly in strategic sectors and which support an incentive-based carbon transition economy in developing countries and LDCs, while providing them enough flexibility in accordance with international environmental and climate law;
- The risks of new technologies, such as AI algorithmic bias against Global South communities, need to be acknowledged, and that access to the very same technologies should not only be promoted but become a priority and commitment by developed countries;

⁵⁶ United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, “Guidelines for the Governance of Digital Platforms”. Available from <https://www.unesco.org/en/internet-conference/guidelines>.

- The role of intellectual property as barriers to access to technologies (including sustainable/green ones) and the need of flexibilities to be used by developing countries to ensure their industrialization and innovation purposes should be recognized;
- The further proliferation of rules in free trade and investment agreements that limit the policy space of developing countries should be avoided. In this regard, urgent reforms of WTO rules are required so that all countries are able to respond to emerging challenges. These necessitate a multilateral framework to promote domestic production including through the introduction of local content requirements to promote domestic investment;
- Overall, the support to developing countries' energetic and green transition has been extremely limited and needs to be redesigned as to address structural causes of inequality.

Finally, many of these issues overlap directly with the implementation of Goal 17 and should not be treated in total separation. For example, “Promote the development, transfer, dissemination and diffusion of environmentally sound technologies to developing countries on favourable terms, including on concessional and preferential terms, as mutually agreed” (Target 17.7) and others are directly related to the success of SDG 9 as well.

SDG 13 - Climate Action

Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts

Climate change is the major challenge of our time. Despite the comprehensive international framework developed to address climate change,⁵⁷ the net anthropogenic greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions have continued to rise.⁵⁸ Increasing global temperatures will mean even “more melting ice, higher sea levels, more heatwaves and other types of extreme weather, and greater impacts on food security, health, the environment and sustainable development.”⁵⁹

According to the latest Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), “between 2010 and 2020, human mortality from floods, droughts and storms was 15 times higher in highly vulnerable regions, compared to regions with very low vulnerability.”⁶⁰ The need for taking climate action on adaptation and mitigation of the effects of climate change, including irreparable losses to ecosystems and human lives, should be a priority. Yet, measures to build resilience have remained limited, focusing on immediate impacts or short-term risks. Similarly, disparity between the level of adaptation and mitigation among developing and developed countries remains persistent. According to the IPCC, developing countries alone will need \$127 billion per year by 2030 and \$295 billion per year by 2050 to adapt to climate change. This is however only a small fraction of the total finance needs for emerging markets and developing countries (excluding China), which as per one estimate, will be required to spend around \$1 trillion per year by 2025 and around \$2.4 trillion per year by 2030 on climate actions⁶¹.

As the impacts of climate change continue to be widespread and severe, the losses and damages are continuously increasing. The United Nations Secretary-General (SG) has even described this issue as “an atlas of human suffering and a damning indictment of failed climate leadership.”⁶² The number of persons affected by disasters per 100,000 people rose from 1,198 during 2005-2015 to 2,113 during 2012-2021,⁶³ and water scarcity and higher temperatures can

⁵⁷ The institutional and legal framework includes the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), adopted during the Earth Summit (1992), including its Kyoto Protocol (1997), and the Paris Agreement (PA), adopted in 2015.

⁵⁸ Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, *Climate Change 2022: Mitigation of Climate Change*, Summary for Policymakers, para. B.1, p. 6.

⁵⁹ See: World Meteorological Organization, “New climate predictions increase likelihood of temporarily reaching 1.5 °C in next 5 years”, Press Release, 27 May 2021. Available from <https://wmo.int/news/media-centre/new-climate-predictions-increase-likelihood-of-temporarily-reaching-15-degc-next-5-years>.

⁶⁰ Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, “Summary for Policymakers”, in *Climate Change 2023: Synthesis Report*, Contribution of Working Groups I, II and III to the Sixth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (Geneva, 2023). Available from https://www.ipcc.ch/report/ar6/syr/downloads/report/IPCC_AR6_SYR_SPM.pdf.

⁶¹ V. Songwe, N. Stern, A. Bhattacharya, *Finance for climate action: Scaling up investment for climate and development*, (London, Grantham Research Institute on Climate Change and the Environment, London School of Economics and Political Science, 2022).

⁶² See: United Nations, “IPCC adaptation report ‘a damning indictment of failed global leadership on climate’”, 28 February 2022 in <https://news.un.org/en/story/2022/02/1112852>.

⁶³ See: United Nations, “Goal 1: No Poverty,” Statistics Division, Department of Economic and Social Affairs. Available from <https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/report/2023/Goal-01/>.

spread vector-borne diseases, such as malaria, dengue, chikungunya and Zika which are affecting about half of the global population in the world.⁶⁴

Loss and damage have become a priority for developing countries given the economic and non-economic nature of the negative consequences of climate change.⁶⁵ A report by the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNODRR) concluded that the risk and cost of disasters are increasing globally, as the number of disasters per year may increase by 40 percent by 2030. The number of extreme temperature events per year will likely increase to almost triple between 2001 and 2030, while “[e]conomic losses from disasters have more than doubled over the past three decades, showing an increase of 145% from an average of around \$70 billion per year in the 1990s to over \$170 billion per year in the decade ending in 2020.”⁶⁶

These unavoidable impacts mostly affect developing countries and vulnerable communities that continue to have limited resources available to fight against them. Since 2008, extreme floods and storms have forced over 20 million people from their homes every year, and negatively affected agricultural productivity and food security, particularly in the Global South.⁶⁷ Therefore, for developing countries, actions addressing climate-related ‘loss and damage’ and other climate actions need to be effective, appropriate, based on principles of equity and Common but Differentiated Responsibilities and Respective Capabilities (CBDR-RC), and suited for meeting the challenges they face. Such actions must also consider that the impacts of climate change are not limited to economic loss and environmental damage alone but are also linked to issues such as food insecurity, malnutrition, natural resource degradation and increased human displacement and migration, thereby posing a threat to the fulfilment and realization of human rights globally⁶⁸.

The ‘Glasgow Climate Pact’ from the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC)’s 26th Conference of the Parties (COP 26) recognized the need for developed countries to provide enhanced and additional support for activities “addressing loss and damage associated with the adverse effects of climate change”⁶⁹. This long standing demand of developing countries was finally realized in 2022, when the COP 27 created the ‘Loss and Damage Fund’. It was operationalized at COP28 with pledges of 661.39 million

⁶⁴ Mirza Alas, *Malaria and Dengue: Understanding two infectious diseases affecting developing countries and their link to Climate Change*, Research Paper, No. 133 (Geneva, South Centre, 2021), p. 5. Available from <https://www.southcentre.int/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/RP-133.pdf>.

⁶⁵ United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, Non-economic Losses in the Context of the Work Programme on Loss and Damage, 9 October 2013. Available from <https://unfccc.int/resource/docs/2013/tp/02.pdf>.

⁶⁶ United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction, *Global Assessment Report on Disaster Risk Reduction 2022: Our World at Risk: Transforming Governance for a Resilient Future* (Geneva, United Nations, 2022), p. 202. Available from <https://www.undrr.org/media/79595/download?startDownload=true>.

⁶⁷ Sophie Boehm and Clea Schumer, “10 Big Findings from the 2023 IPCC Report on Climate Change”, World Resources Institute, 20 March 2023. Available from <https://www.wri.org/insights/2023-ippcc-ar6-synthesis-report-climate-change-findings>.

⁶⁸ See: FAO, IFAD, UNICEF, WFP and WHO, *The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World 2021* (Rome), p. 65.

⁶⁹ United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, Glasgow Climate Pact. Available from https://unfccc.int/sites/default/files/resource/cma2021_10_add1_adv.pdf.

from various donors⁷⁰. The Fund has been set up as a financial intermediary fund, and it is currently hosted by the World Bank for an interim period of four years.

For the Group of 77 (G77) and China, a much larger share of climate finance needs to be provided in the form of grant-based funding that developing countries will be able to use to address the impacts of climate change-related extreme weather events, such as for rehabilitation, recovery and reconstruction. It should also include innovative solutions for tackling the unique challenges faced by developing and least developed countries. Nonetheless, the level of climate finance necessary to respond to these challenges has still not been mobilised. In addition, an uneven distribution of finance across regions has exacerbated the challenges faced by developing countries in fulfilling their own Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs).

While the establishment of the Loss and Damage Fund could provide important financial support for the countries most affected by climate change, facilitating a just transition in these countries will require significantly enhancing the available financial resources and avenues for resource mobilization, with continuous improvement in the quantity and quality of climate finance in the following years. The world has already breached the 1.5°C limit established in the Paris Agreement⁷¹ over a one year period, and climate outcomes will continue to worsen without urgent actions. The issue of climate finance needs careful attention to avoid the perverse effect of increasing the indebtedness of developing countries, and for ensuring a just transition in the Global South.

Recommendations:

There must be high ambition for the New Collective Quantified Goal (NCQG) at COP 29 in Azerbaijan. Developing countries are seeking to upgrade the \$100 billion goal agreed in 2009, and are calling for developed countries to now provide “at least” \$1 trillion per year in climate finance to developing countries to take required actions to face climate change⁷². Commitments to the Loss and Damage Fund need to be substantially increased and brought in line with the needs and priorities of developing countries who are facing the brunt of climate related natural disasters. More attention needs to be provided to climate finance for adaptation and loss and damage in the Global South.

⁷⁰ United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, “Pledges to the Loss and Damage Fund”. Available from <https://unfccc.int/process-and-meetings/bodies/funds-and-financial-entities/loss-and-damage-fund-joint-interim-secretariat/pledges-to-the-loss-and-damage-fund>.

⁷¹ Attracta Mooney, Jana Tauschinski and Steven Bernard, “Climate Graphic of the Week: Critical 1.5C threshold breached over 12-month period for first time”, *Financial Times*, 8 February 2024. Available from <https://www.ft.com/content/8927424e-2828-4414-86b7-f3a991214288>.

⁷² Vishwa Mohan, “India calls for \$1 trillion per year climate finance from next year, submits its proposal to the UNFCCC”, *The Times of India*, 6 March 2024. Available from <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/articleshow/108276300.cms>.

SDG 14 – Life Below Water

Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development

Target 14.c. Enhance the conservation and sustainable use of oceans and their resources by implementing international law as reflected in the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, which provides the legal framework for the conservation and sustainable use of oceans and their resources, as recalled in paragraph 158 of “The future we want”

Target 14.c of Goal 14 is about implementation of international legal rules relating to conservation and sustainable use of oceans and their resources, as reflected in the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS). Implementation of this target is tracked under SDG indicator 14.c.1 - Number of countries making progress in ratifying, accepting and implementing through legal, policy and institutional frameworks, ocean-related instruments that implement international law, as reflected in the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, for the conservation and sustainable use of the oceans and their resources.

In respect of this target, a major development in 2023 was the adoption of a historic agreement under the UNCLOS, aiming to ensure the conservation and sustainable use of marine biodiversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction or the high seas, which cover over two-thirds of the ocean (BBNJ Treaty). The 2023 UN SDG Report notes in this regard that “... this treaty, once ratified by countries, will help to provide vital protection against pollution, overfishing and habitat destruction in these critical areas.”⁷³

The High Seas treaty provides a legal framework for the conservation and sustainable use of marine biodiversity in over two-thirds of the ocean. It provides an essential framework for cross-sectoral cooperation between and among States and other stakeholders to promote the sustainable development of the ocean and its resources and to address the manifold pressures it faces. The effective and timely implementation of this Agreement will make crucial contributions to achieving the ocean-related goals and targets of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework.

The treaty addresses four key issues.

1. It sets up a framework for the fair and equitable sharing of benefits arising from activities with respect to marine genetic resources and digital sequence information on marine genetic resources of areas beyond national jurisdiction, ensuring that such activities benefit all of humanity. Key achievements of the Treaty include establishing the common heritage of humankind over marine genetic resources beyond areas of national jurisdiction as a central principle; the adoption of the ‘BBNJ Standardised Batch Identifier’ to tag genetic resources from areas beyond national jurisdiction; the obligation to report the outcomes of use of these resources in the form of patents, publications and product development; and an innovative approach of tiered fees based

⁷³ United Nations, *The Sustainable Development Goals Report 2023*, p. 41. Available from <https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/report/2023/The-Sustainable-Development-Goals-Report-2023.pdf>.

on the aggregate use of marine genetic resources, including digital sequence information.

2. The Treaty will enable the establishment of area-based management tools, including marine protected areas, to conserve and sustainably manage vital habitats and species in the high seas and the international seabed area. Such measures are critical for archiving the “30 by 30” global target to effectively conserve and manage at least 30 per cent of the world’s terrestrial and inland water areas, and of marine and coastal areas by 2030, as agreed in the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework.
3. It will ensure that environmental impacts of activities in areas beyond national jurisdiction are assessed and considered in decision-making. It also provides, for the first time, an international legal framework for the assessment of the cumulative impacts of activities and the consequences of climate change, ocean acidification and related impacts, in areas beyond national jurisdiction.
4. The Treaty will also facilitate cooperation in capacity-building and the transfer of marine technology to assist Parties, in particular developing States Parties, in achieving the objectives of the Agreement, so as to level the playing field for all States to responsibly utilize and benefit from marine biodiversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction.

Furthermore, the Agreement addresses several cross-cutting issues, such as its relationship with the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea and relevant legal instruments and frameworks and relevant global, regional, subregional and sectoral bodies, as well as funding and dispute settlement. It also sets up institutional arrangements, including a Conference of the Parties, a Scientific and Technical Body and other subsidiary bodies of the Conference of the Parties, a Clearing-House Mechanism and a secretariat.

The Agreement will be open for signature at the United Nations Headquarters in New York for two years from 20 September 2023, the day after the 2023 SDG Summit. It will enter into force after ratification by sixty States. The Secretary-General is required to convene the first meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Agreement no later than one year after its entry into force. The extent to which States accept, ratify and implement this treaty can be tracked under SDG indicator 14.c.1 as it includes all ocean-related instruments within its scope. However, specific unit of measure in respect of ratification and acceptance of the new treaty must be included under indicator 14.c.1. Currently data collection regarding this indicator is undertaken every 2 years, the last exercise being in 2021. It would be important to have more frequent data collection regarding implementation of the High Seas Treaty.

With respect to the Agreement on Fisheries Subsidies (AFS) concluded at the Twelfth WTO Ministerial Conference in 2022, we concur with the SG report that it is a step towards ocean sustainability. However much more work is needed in the second phase of the WTO fisheries subsidies negotiations to close the loopholes established in the AFS and ensure effective disciplines meet the letter and spirit of SDG 14.6. To achieve this, WTO Members will have to tackle the harmful practices of large scale and distant water fishing nations, address overfishing, preserve developing countries’ existing UNCLOS rights to Exclusive Economic Zones, prohibit new subsidies and new programmes that contribute to overcapacity and

overfishing, and ensure that ‘sustainable’ subsidies that are permitted are subject to an effective demonstration of result. Presently, these aforementioned elements have not been adequately addressed in the negotiations.⁷⁴

Recommendations:

Developing countries should expeditiously ratify the UNCLOS High Seas Treaty.

Indicator 14.c.1 through which implementation of target 14.c is tracked must specifically include a reference to the implementation of the High Seas Treaty as an unit of measure. Data collection to measure progress against the indicator should be more frequent.

In order to meet SDG 14.6, WTO Member States should seek to complete the second phase of the negotiations to include prohibitions on subsidies contributing to overcapacity and overfishing, in particular for large scale and distant water fishing nations. Small-scale and artisanal fishing in developing and least developed countries should be exempted from these disciplines.

⁷⁴ WTO members were not able to conclude “second wave” negotiations at the 13th Ministerial Conference (MC13) held in February-March 2024 in Abu Dhabi.

SDG 15 - Life on Land

Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification and halt and reverse land degradation and biodiversity loss

Target 15.6 under this Goal seeks to “[p]romote fair and equitable sharing of the benefits arising from the utilization of genetic resources and promote appropriate access to such resources, as internationally agreed”. However, unlike some of the other targets under Goal 15, this target does not have a timeframe.

The SDG indicator in relation to this target is Indicator 15.6.1 ‘Number of countries that have adopted legislative, administrative and policy frameworks to ensure fair and equitable sharing of benefits’.⁷⁵

Promotion of fair and equitable benefit sharing from utilization of genetic resources and promoting appropriate access to such resources has been a major issue since the 1992 UN Conference on the Environment and Development (Rio Earth Summit). The UN Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) recognized the sovereign right of States over their natural resources and their authority to determine access to genetic resources. Contracting Parties agreed to make endeavours to create conditions to facilitate access to genetic resources for environmentally sound uses by other contracting Parties. It also mandated that access to genetic resources shall be on mutually agreed terms and subject to the prior informed consent contracting party providing access to genetic resources. In 2010, the Nagoya Protocol on Access to Genetic Resources and the Fair and Equitable Sharing of Benefits Arising from their Utilisation was adopted as a Protocol under the CBD. The Nagoya Protocol covers genetic resources and traditional knowledge associated with genetic resources, as well as the benefits arising from their utilization by setting out core obligations for its contracting Parties to take measures in relation to access, benefit-sharing and compliance.

Alongside the Nagoya Protocol, the Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO) International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (ITPGRFA) addresses conservation and sustainable use of plant genetic resources for food and agriculture and the fair and equitable sharing of the benefits arising out of their use, in harmony with the Convention on Biological Diversity. This treaty has established the Multilateral System of Access and Benefit-sharing, which facilitates exchanges of plant genetic resources for purposes of agricultural research and breeding to contribute to sustainable agriculture and food security, by providing a transparent and reliable framework for the exchange of crop genetic resources. The Multilateral System is instrumental to achieving the conservation and sustainable use of plant genetic resources as well as the fair and equitable sharing of benefits arising from their use. The Standard Material Transfer Agreement is a mandatory standard contract for parties wishing to provide and receive material under the Multilateral System.

While the SDG indicator tracks the number of countries that have adopted legislative, administrative and policy frameworks to implement the Nagoya Protocol and the ITPGRFA, this in itself does not reflect some of the major challenges to effective implementation of target

⁷⁵ SDG Indicator Metadata. Available from <https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/metadata/files/Metadata-15-06-01.pdf>.

15.6 to promote fair and equitable sharing of benefits arising from the utilization of genetic resources.

This is because in spite of the adoption of these treaties, many issues relating to access to genetic resources and associated traditional knowledge and the fair and equitable sharing of benefits arising from their utilization remain inadequately addressed in other multilateral fora. There has been a lack of effective engagement in the WTO on a long pending proposal by developing countries for an amendment to the TRIPS Agreement to introduce a mandatory disclosure requirement of the source and origin of genetic resources and associated traditional knowledge. At the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO), after more than a decade of negotiations, an international legal instrument on genetic resources and associated traditional knowledge was adopted at a Diplomatic Conference in May 2024 that can contribute to reduce the misappropriation of those resources and knowledge by establishing a requirement to disclose the source of genetic resources and associated traditional knowledge in patent applications.

Another area concerning access to genetic resources and benefit-sharing where an urgent multilateral solution is needed is in the WHO negotiations on an international treaty on pandemic preparedness, prevention and response and the amendments to the International Health Regulations. In the negotiations member States have recognized the need for establishment of a pathogen access and benefit-sharing system to provide a legal framework consistent with the CBD and the Nagoya Protocol to facilitate rapid sharing of pathogens as genetic resources for development of medical countermeasures and assured benefit-sharing on an equal footing. However, it is critical that a comprehensive access and benefit-sharing mechanism for all pathogen material and sequence information is developed with specific obligations both on sharing of pathogen material and sequence information and the sharing of benefits arising from their utilization, including sharing of vaccines and medicines developed through such use.

Moreover, there is also the need to update existing and future legal regimes on access to genetic resources (GRs) and benefit sharing to make them applicable to utilization not only of physical samples of genetic resources, but also the genetic sequence data or digital sequence information derived from genetic resources. These are being discussed in relevant bodies of the Nagoya Protocol, the FAO Plant Treaty as well as the WHO.

Recommendations:

The SDG indicator 15.6.1 should be modified to assess progress not only in terms of implementation of the Nagoya Protocol and the ITPGRFA, but also establishment of effective access and benefit sharing (ABS) mechanisms in other related fora.

Despite the International Treaty on Intellectual Property, Genetic Resources, and Associated Traditional Knowledge's narrower scope and limitations compared to some national laws, the treaty sets minimum disclosure standards and allows for broader national regulations. Its

effectiveness will hinge on its rapid entry into force and a commitment to expand the scope of its coverage.

In the WTO, developing countries should propose to expedite the negotiations on the proposed amendment to the TRIPS Agreement for a mandatory disclosure requirement and conclude the negotiations in a time bound manner.

A comprehensive mechanism in the WHO governing access to pathogen biological material and their sequence information and prompt and equitable sharing of benefits arising therefrom should be established.

SDG 17 – Partnerships for the Goals

Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development

As a preliminary comment, it is salutary that the 2023 SDG Report acknowledges the role of debt crises, how official development assistance (ODA) has increased but mainly due to the amount allocated to Ukraine, the persistent gender and connectivity gaps, and how geopolitical tensions have hindered development and the fulfilment of this goal⁷⁶. The following remarks focus however on a different dimension of SDG 17, with a focus on preventing a wrong interpretation on what partnerships for sustainable development should mean, particularly considering the interests of developing countries and LDCs.

This goal recognizes the need for cooperation and partnerships between different stakeholders, which should be seen as an acknowledgement of the important role played by civil society organizations in different areas, as well as research institutes, academics, among other relevant stakeholders (such as indigenous peoples, minorities, etc.). In addition, the goal explicitly recognizes the importance of South-South cooperation, which must be further advanced.

However, the idea of partnerships has also been often wrongly interpreted as a wide recognition of public-private partnerships of (almost) any sort (see Target 17.17: Encourage and promote effective public, public-private and civil society partnerships, building on the experience and resourcing strategies of partnerships), regardless of risks of conflict of interest and the potential of corporate capture.

For example, they legitimize economic-related organizations such as WIPO and WTO to engage with the private sector and consider that any such interactions are contributing to the fulfilment of SDG 17, even when they may be ultimately undermining them. Overall, the notion of partnerships as per reflected in most activities and reports by UN agencies and the Secretariat itself has been for the most part alienated from the real needs of developing countries, often creating more dependency (technological, technical, institutional, knowledge and resources from the partners – instead of, for example, real technology transfer and the creation of real autonomy to developing countries and LDCs) and mostly benefiting developed countries.

Multi-stakeholder processes, referred to in Target 17.16 (“Enhance the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development, complemented by multi-stakeholder partnerships that mobilize and share knowledge, expertise, technology and financial resources, to support the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals in all countries, in particular developing countries”), such as those in internet governance, for example, are criticized for enabling a double participation of the private sector: the so-called ‘tech community’, which was supposed to bring technical and expert inputs to the processes, are actually more often than not representing large corporate firms; in addition, the representatives of industry also partake in these processes. In addition, a large tech company will have more information and will be better supported financially to engage in a negotiation than the delegation of a small developing country or LDC. Many of the solutions provided to LDCs and developing countries, such as solving infrastructure gaps, are

⁷⁶ United Nations, *The Sustainable Development Goals Report 2023*.

proposed via private sector partnerships – which may create dependency and not always solve structural gaps.

Multi-stakeholderism has also been utilized to include and legitimize corporate entities into consultation processes and negotiating bodies alongside Member States – largely without further consideration on asymmetry of information, disparities in capacities and resources, among other issues. In negotiations of the reform of investor-State dispute settlement (ISDS) regimes at the United Nations Commission on International Trade Law (UNCITRAL), there is strong participation of arbitrators and those representing the current system, rather than, for instance, those mostly affected by decisions taken by such bodies, including local communities and indigenous peoples (to stay with one notable real-life example).

Across various UN agencies, partnerships may also be utilized as a means to legitimize projects undertaken or designed with or alongside private entities which may give rise to conflict of interest and even potentially harmful outcomes for the fulfilment of SDGs. For example, at the WHO, the ongoing work on digital health relies on different software providers which also creates dependence on their platforms. There is a low level of scrutiny and analysis of how selection takes place and what safeguards are there – the narrative whereby such forms of partnerships generally contribute to SDGs may therefore legitimize this lack of transparency and further disenfranchise developing countries. For instance, a general note by pharmaceutical company Merck on SDG 17 considers that their investments, which create economic opportunities for the company itself, is consistent with the best practices framework of SDG 17⁷⁷.

This is just one example of how the SDG can be directly distorted, requiring a more robust assessment of what should be reported under this SDG, and also to recognize how the issue of conflict of interest and governance are essential to a meaningful and realistic partnership model. A review of what have been considered to be best practices under SDG 17 is needed. In addition, it would be highly welcome to assess the past and create guidelines as to ensure that the country-level processes and what UN agencies are reporting as part of this SDG goal are exclusively real, positive and development-oriented partnerships, and not ways to legitimize partnerships that only generate economic benefits to private entities.

In addition, SDG 17 is related to several of the issues pertaining to international trade and sharing/transfer of technologies, therefore particularly attuned to SDG 9-related activities, including target 17.10 on the World Trade Organization and the need to promote a “universal, rules-based, open, non-discriminatory and equitable multilateral trading system”, which has clearly not been the reality. The indicator under this target only refers to tariffs and largely ignores the misuse by developed countries, particularly the United States, which have largely undermined the WTO’s ultimate goals.

⁷⁷ See: United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, “SDG Good Practices, Success Stories and Lessons Learned in the Implementation of the 2030 Agenda, Second Open Call: Towards the Decade of Action to Deliver the Sustainable Development Goals”, August 2021. Available from <https://sdgs.un.org/sites/default/files/2021-10/Summary%20of%20outcomes%20of%20the%20second%20open%20call.pdf>.

The table below sets out the issues under the WTO Doha Work Programme that still need to be concluded to partially meet SDG 17.10, which is to “[p]romote a universal, rules-based, open, non discriminatory and equitable multilateral trading system under the World Trade Organization, including through the conclusion of negotiations under its Doha Development Agenda”.

Doha Work Programme negotiating issue	Outcomes in the Doha Round
Agriculture (para 13)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • None except for marginal outcome on General Services. • Issues remaining include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Outcome on substantial reductions in trade-distorting domestic support
Services (para 15)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • None (Accountancy Disciplines agreed but only enters in force upon conclusion of Doha Round)
Market access for non-agricultural products (para 16)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • None
Trade-related aspects of intellectual property rights (para 17-19)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • None • Issues remaining include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Establishment of a multilateral system of notification and registration of geographical indications for wines and spirits - Examination of, <i>inter alia</i>, the relationship between the TRIPS Agreement and the Convention on Biological Diversity, the protection of traditional knowledge and folklore
Relationship between trade and investment (paras 20-22)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • None • 2004 July Framework (WT/L/579) - the Council agrees that these issues, mentioned in the Doha Ministerial Declaration in paragraphs 20-22, 23-25 and 26 respectively, will not form part of the Work Programme set out in that Declaration and therefore no work towards negotiations on any of these issues will take place within the WTO during the Doha Round.
Interaction between trade and competition policy (paras 23-25)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • None • 2004 July Framework (WT/L/579) - the Council agrees that these issues, mentioned in the Doha Ministerial Declaration in paragraphs 20-22, 23-25 and 26 respectively, will not form part of the Work Programme set out in that Declaration and therefore no work towards negotiations on any of

Doha Work Programme negotiating issue	Outcomes in the Doha Round
	these issues will take place within the WTO during the Doha Round.
Transparency in government procurement (para 26)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • None • 2004 July Framework (WT/L/579) - the Council agrees that these issues, mentioned in the Doha Ministerial Declaration in paragraphs 20-22, 23-25 and 26 respectively, will not form part of the Work Programme set out in that Declaration and therefore no work towards negotiations on any of these issues will take place within the WTO during the Doha Round.
WTO rules (para 28-29)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Partial outcome on Regional Trade Agreements (RTA) Transparency Mechanism (2006) according to the mandate in para 29 to clarify and improve disciplines and procedures under the existing WTO provisions applying to RTAs • Partial Fisheries Subsidies Agreement at MC12 (linkages to SDG 14.6)
Dispute Settlement Understanding (para 30)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Only on Strictly Confidential Information
Trade and environment (paras 31-33)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • None
Trade, debt and finance (para 36)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • None
Trade and transfer of technology (para 37)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • None
Special and differential treatment (para 44)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Partial outcome on Hong Kong Annex F (LDC duty-free and quota-free - DFQF and 4 other LDC-specific decisions)

LDC-Specific Issues⁷⁸

Since 1971, the United Nations has recognized least developed countries (LDCs) as a category of States that are deemed highly disadvantaged in their development process, for structural, historical and also geographical reasons. It is therefore important to monitor progress on the SDGs for LDCs. Furthermore, “least developed countries” is explicitly mentioned at least 24 times in the SDGs. However, we are not aware of a comprehensive SDG Review Report specifically focusing on LDCs’ progress on the SDGs.

We note however that the Annexes to the SG SDG report contain LDC-specific data.⁷⁹ Based on this some observations could be made. In particular, on SDG 2 (hunger), the situation is worse than during adoption of the SDGs. The prevalence of undernourishment has increased from 20% in 2015 to 24.3% in 2022. Similar tendencies are observed for other food security indicators. Anaemia in women has increased. At the same time, total official flows to the agriculture sector have remained stagnant.

Trade is an area where the SDGs have not been met for LDCs, as observed in the SG’s SDG Review Report. With respect to SDG 17.11, the share of LDCs’ exports in global merchandise trade amounted to 1.05% in 2020 compared with the target of 2.06%.

Review of the SDGs should be based on solid and valid indicators. We are concerned that SDG 17.12.1 does not appear to have a valid measurement for progress on SDG 17.12, duty-free and quota-free (DFQF) market access for LDCs. For example, in case of prohibitive tariffs, trade would be zero and the trade weighted tariff would be zero as well. Obviously in such cases, there is no market access. It also does not measure progress on the 2015 WTO Nairobi Ministerial Decision on Rules of Origin for LDC DFQF schemes. The indicator for SDG 17.11 would also need to be updated as 2020 has already passed.

Recommendations:

The UN should regularly publish reviews of LDC progress on the SDGs.

The international community should adopt positive measures for LDCs to enable progress on their food security and trade-related SDGs.

The indicators for trade-related SDGs, including SDG 17.11 and SDG 17.12, should be reviewed and improved, with consultation with the LDC Group in Geneva and other relevant intergovernmental organisations providing support to LDCs and with particular expertise in trade matters such as South Centre and the United Nations Trade and Development (UNCTAD).

⁷⁸ See on this subject, the Annex to this paper and Peter Lunenborg, *Least Developed Countries and Their Progress on the Sustainable Development Goals*, Research Paper, No. 183 (Geneva, South Centre, 2023). Available from https://www.southcentre.int/wp-content/uploads/2023/09/RP183_LDCs-and-Their-Progress-on-the-SDGs_EN.pdf.

⁷⁹ United Nations Economic and Social Council, *Progress Towards the Sustainable Development Goals*. Available from https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/files/report/2023/E_2023_64_Statistical_Annex_I_and_II.pdf.

Annex: LDC-Specific SDGs

SDG and target	SDG indicator
1.a Ensure significant mobilization of resources from a variety of sources, including through enhanced development cooperation, in order to provide adequate and predictable means for developing countries, in particular least developed countries, to implement programmes and policies to end poverty in all its dimensions	1.a.1 Total official development assistance grants from all donors that focus on poverty reduction as a share of the recipient country's gross national income
2.a Increase investment, including through enhanced international cooperation, in rural infrastructure, agricultural research and extension services, technology development and plant and livestock gene banks in order to enhance agricultural productive capacity in developing countries, in particular least developed countries	2.a.1 The agriculture orientation index for government expenditures
3.c Substantially increase health financing and the recruitment, development, training and retention of the health workforce in developing countries, especially in least developed countries and small island developing States	3.c.1 Health worker density and distribution
4.b By 2020, substantially expand globally the number of scholarships available to developing countries, in particular least developed countries, small island developing States and African countries, for enrolment in higher education, including vocational training and information and communications technology, technical, engineering and scientific programmes, in developed countries and other developing countries	4.b.1 Volume of official development assistance flows for scholarships by sector and type of study
4.c By 2030, substantially increase the supply of qualified teachers, including through international cooperation for teacher training in developing countries, especially least developed countries and small island developing States	4.c.1 Proportion of teachers with the minimum required qualifications, by education level

SDG and target	SDG indicator
7.b By 2030, expand infrastructure and upgrade technology for supplying modern and sustainable energy services for all in developing countries, in particular least developed countries, small island developing States and landlocked developing countries, in accordance with their respective programmes of support	7.b.1 Installed renewable energy-generating capacity in developing countries (in watts per capita)
8.1 Sustain per capita economic growth in accordance with national circumstances and, in particular, at least 7 per cent gross domestic product growth per annum in the least developed countries	8.1.1 Annual growth rate of real GDP per capita
8.a Increase Aid for Trade support for developing countries, in particular least developed countries, including through the Enhanced Integrated Framework for Trade-related Technical Assistance to Least Developed Countries	8.a.1 Aid for Trade commitments and disbursements
9.2 Promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and, by 2030, significantly raise industry's share of employment and gross domestic product, in line with national circumstances, and double its share in least developed countries	9.2.1 Manufacturing value added as a proportion of GDP and per capita
9.a Facilitate sustainable and resilient infrastructure development in developing countries through enhanced financial, technological and technical support to African countries, least developed countries, landlocked developing countries and small island developing States	9.a.1 Total official international support (official development assistance plus other official flows) to infrastructure
9.c Significantly increase access to information and communications technology and strive to provide universal and affordable access to the Internet in least developed countries by 2020	9.c.1 Proportion of population covered by a mobile network, by technology
10.a Implement the principle of special and differential treatment for developing countries, in particular least developed countries, in	10.a.1 Proportion of tariff lines applied to imports from least developed countries and developing countries with zero-tariff

SDG and target	SDG indicator
accordance with World Trade Organization agreements	
10.b Encourage official development assistance and financial flows, including foreign direct investment, to States where the need is greatest, in particular least developed countries, African countries, small island developing States and landlocked developing countries, in accordance with their national plans and programmes	10.b.1 Total resource flows for development, by recipient and donor countries and type of flow (e.g. official development assistance, foreign direct investment and other flows)
11.c Support least developed countries, including through financial and technical assistance, in building sustainable and resilient buildings utilizing local materials	No suitable replacement indicator was proposed. The global statistical community is encouraged to work to develop an indicator that could be proposed for the 2025 comprehensive review. See E/CN.3/2020/2, paragraph 23.
13.b Promote mechanisms for raising capacity for effective climate change-related planning and management in least developed countries and small island developing States, including focusing on women, youth and local and marginalized communities	13.b.1 Number of least developed countries and small island developing States with nationally determined contributions, long-term strategies, national adaptation plans and adaptation communications, as reported to the secretariat of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
14.6 By 2020, prohibit certain forms of fisheries subsidies which contribute to overcapacity and overfishing, eliminate subsidies that contribute to illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing and refrain from introducing new such subsidies, recognizing that appropriate and effective special and differential treatment for developing and least developed countries should be an integral part of the World Trade Organization fisheries subsidies negotiation	14.6.1 Degree of implementation of international instruments aiming to combat illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing
14.7 By 2030, increase the economic benefits to small island developing States and least developed countries from the sustainable use of marine resources, including through sustainable management of fisheries, aquaculture and tourism	14.7.1 Sustainable fisheries as a proportion of GDP in small island developing States, least developed countries and all countries

SDG and target	SDG indicator
14.a Increase scientific knowledge, develop research capacity and transfer marine technology, taking into account the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission Criteria and Guidelines on the Transfer of Marine Technology, in order to improve ocean health and to enhance the contribution of marine biodiversity to the development of developing countries, in particular small island developing States and least developed countries	14.a.1 Proportion of total research budget allocated to research in the field of marine technology
17.2 Developed countries to implement fully their official development assistance commitments, including the commitment by many developed countries to achieve the target of 0.7 per cent of gross national income for official development assistance (ODA/GNI) to developing countries and 0.15 to 0.20 per cent of ODA/GNI to least developed countries; ODA providers are encouraged to consider setting a target to provide at least 0.20 per cent of ODA/GNI to least developed countries	17.2.1 Net official development assistance, total and to least developed countries, as a proportion of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) Development Assistance Committee donors' gross national income (GNI)
17.5 Adopt and implement investment promotion regimes for least developed countries	17.5.1 Number of countries that adopt and implement investment promotion regimes for developing countries, including the least developed countries
17.8 Fully operationalize the technology bank and science, technology and innovation capacity-building mechanism for least developed countries by 2017 and enhance the use of enabling technology, in particular information and communications technology	17.8.1 Proportion of individuals using the Internet
17.11 Significantly increase the exports of developing countries, in particular with a view to doubling the least developed countries' share of global exports by 2020	17.11.1 Developing countries' and least developed countries' share of global exports
17.12 Realize timely implementation of duty-free and quota-free market access on a lasting basis for all least developed countries, consistent with World Trade Organization	17.12.1 Weighted average tariffs faced by developing countries, least developed countries and small island developing States

SDG and target	SDG indicator
<p>decisions, including by ensuring that preferential rules of origin applicable to imports from least developed countries are transparent and simple, and contribute to facilitating market access</p>	
<p>17.18 By 2020, enhance capacity-building support to developing countries, including for least developed countries and small island developing States, to increase significantly the availability of high-quality, timely and reliable data disaggregated by income, gender, age, race, ethnicity, migratory status, disability, geographic location and other characteristics relevant in national contexts</p>	<p>17.18.1 Statistical capacity indicator for Sustainable Development Goal monitoring</p>



South Centre

International Environment House 2

Chemin de Ballexert 7-9

POB 228, 1211 Geneva 19

Switzerland

Tel.: +41 22 791 8050

south@southcentre.int

www.southcentre.int



[South Centre](#)



[SouthCentre](#)



[South Centre, Geneva](#)



[SouthCentre GVA](#)



[southcentre.gva](#)