



## FRAMING THE FUTURE OF DEVELOPMENT

### ... to build greater resilience and preparedness.

UN DESA helped Member States better understand the complex challenges created by recurrent crises by monitoring, analyzing, and forecasting social, economic, and demographic trends. UN DESA also helped Member States build greater resilience and preparedness through targeted capacity-development activities and by building tools to help improve governance.

### UN DESA ...

- Studied the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and other crises on the 2030 Agenda and examined the options available for the global community to achieve the SDGs.
- Supported the deliberations by the Secretary-General on Our Common Agenda.
- Provided evidence-based analysis of the linkages between population growth and the social, economic and environmental dimensions of sustainable development.
- Provided a view of the challenges faced by LDCs and developing countries in recovering and emerging from the multiple crises affecting the world.
- Explored the opportunities, challenges, key policies and investments needed to build productive capacities in LDCs, LLDCs, SIDS as well as MICs.
- Highlighted the importance of public institutions and public servants in building back better as they work to meet the 2030 deadline for implementing the SDGs.
- Provided training on useful tools and new techniques for digital governance that can help improve the efficiency and reach of services.

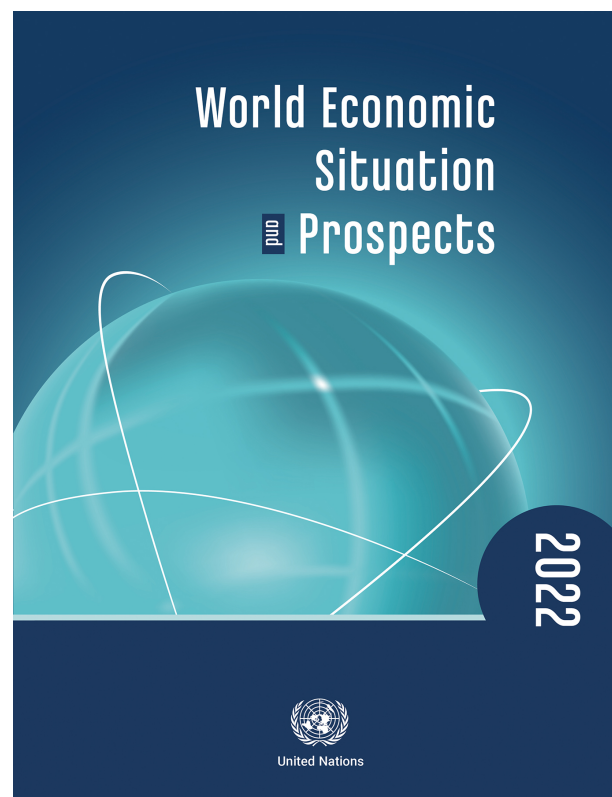
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## FRAMING THE FUTURE OF DEVELOPMENT

In 2021-2022 the world experienced a combination of long-term and short-term crises with interlinked and compounding effects on the achievement of the SDGs and implementation of the 2030 Agenda. Climate change is causing more droughts, floods, and severe weather events. The COVID-19 pandemic lingers on, slowing economic growth, increasing unemployment, raising poverty and hunger, and especially impacting women and children. The war in the Ukraine is affecting the lives of those in and around the conflict directly, and having a broader effect on global commodity markets, finance, and the nature of global partnerships, and all with the greatest effect on the people and countries least able to respond. UN DESA's analytical capacity and training programmes were leveraged to help countries better understand how to build greater resilience to recurrent crises and forge the best pathways for achieving the 2030 Agenda.

### Analyzing the economic impact of the concurrent crises

The *World Economic Situation and Prospects 2022* (WESP) analyzed the increasingly fragile recovery of the global economy. It reviewed, among others, the macroeconomic and development impacts of the quantitative easing (QE) implemented by the major central banks. The report highlighted that while QE kept interest rates low and boosted asset prices worldwide, investments remained inadequate to stimulate growth. The global supply chain disruptions, particularly in food and energy, since the outbreak of the war in Ukraine, adversely impacted many developing countries, as highlighted in the WESP mid-year update. While concern about energy security dented the global efforts to deal with the climate emergency, the report advocated economic recovery through the sustainable path, investing in renewable energy to enhance energy resilience. The WESP continued to draw significant attention in 2022, topping the DESA downloads in the first half of the year. The January launch was covered in close to 1,600 media articles in 96 countries, 58% more coverage



than 2021. There was also 33% growth in social media mentions and a 48% increase in social media engagement over 2021.

### Ensuring progress during crises: Charting the way forward for the SDGs

UN DESA examined the potential impact of the current crises on SDG progress and the additional effort that will be needed to ensure the 2030 Agenda is achieved. The analysis was published in the policy brief "Ensuring SDG progress amid recurrent crises", which focused on the influence of crises on the SDGs and the policy implications through seven channels: i) Economic growth, inequality, fiscal expenditures, and sustainability; ii) Inflation, interest rate, financial flows and investment; iii) Global trade and supply chains; iv) Migration, remittances and labour markets; v) Changes in individual and collective behaviour; vi) Resilience and capacity to respond to future shocks; and vii) Policy shifts in prominent economies and regions. The research found that the confluence of crises puts countries in a perpetual crisis

mode, with limited room to recover and invest in sustainable development. These additional difficulties call for a redoubling of investments to accelerate SDG progress. The Policy Brief was presented to Member States and policy makers at a side-event at the 2022 HLPF, with nearly 130 registered participants.

Similarly, the *Sustainable Development Outlook 2021* charted a way forward for the global community to achieve the SDGs, despite the setback caused by COVID-19. Launched in September 2021, the report focused on SDG 1 (poverty), SDG 2 (hunger), SDG 3 (health and well-being), SDG 8 (growth and employment), SDG 10 (inequality), and their interlinkages. The report presented plausible future scenarios for SDG progress, focused on cross-cutting policy efforts with potential for positive impact on multiple SDGs. Achieving the SDGs by 2030 will require additional investments in key areas: accelerating vaccination by making the COVID-19 vaccine a public good; strengthening access to quality and affordable universal health coverage and social protection; pursuing structural transformation aimed at growth, equity and environmental





protection; strengthening international solidarity; sharing the Earth equitably with other species; and harnessing the crisis response efforts to overcome political barriers to difficult policy changes.

### Forwarding Our Common Agenda

Following the release of the report of the Secretary-General on Our Common Agenda, in September 2021, UN DESA has been providing solid support to the follow-up to and deliberations on the report's development-focused proposals. Drawing on its interdisciplinary thought leadership, the Department serves as lead or co-lead to move forward the work on international tax cooperation, legal identity, and civil society engagement, among others, and is supporting Member State consideration of a possible World Social Summit in 2025 and a Biennial Summit on the Global Economy. The Department has taken a future-focused and collaborative approach working across its various workstreams and across the UN system, to engage a broad range of entities.

### Building resilient and sustainable digital societies and economies

UN DESA is partnering with UN ESCAP in a forward-looking initiative to explore the viability of technology sandboxes through building the institutional capacity of Bangladesh, Kazakhstan and Maldives. This innovative and catalytic approach to digital government development is expected to accelerate progress towards sustainable development.

Sandboxes have gained popularity in fintech in recent years but could go beyond the financial sector to others, including health, education, transport, energy, connectivity and the digital economy, in fast-tracking smart and risk-aware implementation of digital policies.

The promise of sandboxes allows evidence-based decision-making and adaptive deployment of digital technologies in the pursuit of development aims. It allows institutions and regulators to experiment with digital technologies and innovations at the edge or even outside of the existing policy space and regulatory framework.

### Changing mindsets for public sector transformation to achieve the SDGs

UN DESA organized a workshop on, "Innovation, Digital Government, and Changing Mindsets for Public Sector Transformation in Guyana to Achieve the Sustainable Development Goals", in March 2022, in collaboration with the Government of Guyana, the Caribbean Centre for Development Administration (CARICAD), and the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), and with the support of the Resident Coordinator Office. The training was attended by around seventy Permanent and Deputy Permanent Secretaries, Regional Executive Officers, and Chief Executive Officers of Guyana. The participants worked together to identify strengths, challenges, recommendations, actions, and priorities to inform a Roadmap for Public Sector

Transformation, Innovation, and Digital Government and Changing Mindsets in Guyana. Participants agreed to establish a Steering Committee for public sector transformation in Guyana. The recommendations and roadmap will be presented to the Cabinet for further action.

"The Capacity Development Training Workshop on Innovation, Digital Government and Changing Mindsets for Public Sector Transformation in Guyana to Achieve the SDGs has started a journey toward exceptional things for the public service as there is an abundance of resources that need to be supported by an advanced/modernized public service framework."

- Guyana Ministry of Public Service

### Planning a sustainable future for a growing global population

A path towards a more sustainable future requires demographic foresight to guide countries in policy formulation and implementation. UN DESA's *Global Population Growth and Sustainable Development*, launched in February 2022, examines the linkages between population growth and the social, economic and environmental dimensions of sustainable development. UN DESA's medium-variant projections anticipate that global population may grow by 3 billion people over the rest of the 21st century. Rapid population growth makes it more difficult for low-income and lower-middle-income countries to afford the increase in public expenditures on a per capita basis that is needed to eradicate poverty, end hunger and malnutrition, and ensure universal access to health care, education and other essential services.

A decline in fertility and the resulting youthful population in some regions present an opportunity for accelerated economic growth if sufficient improvements are made in education, health, gender equality and access to decent work for all.

The report underscores that higher incomes contribute more to environmental degradation than population growth. Limiting adverse climate change impacts will require rapid progress towards decoupling economic activity from environmental degradation. The need for rapid and sustained growth of economies in low-income and lower-middle-income countries will require wealthy countries and the international community to assist these countries with the necessary technical and financial assistance to minimize environmental impacts.

### Multiple crises take their toll on the most vulnerable countries

Least developed countries, the most vulnerable among developing countries, have been hit particularly hard by the socioeconomic impact of COVID-19, despite having been mostly spared the worst direct health impacts that affected several other countries. The UN DESA-led analysis by the Committee for Development Policy (CDP) from 2021 has sadly proven to be on point. Recovery from the pandemic affects the development of LDCs in multiple ways, including their graduation from the LDC category. The 2022 [monitoring reports](#) focus on country-specific impacts of the multiple crises. By enhancing the [monitoring system](#) of countries graduating and graduated from the LDC category, the CDP and its secretariat established a system that can create linkages between external shocks and graduation-related international support.

Even if times are tough for everyone, there is a need to focus to build resilience of those that are most in need. Even though the pandemic is still not over, the ongoing war in Ukraine is a further blow, not only for global peace and security but also for LDCs exposed to the resulting disruptions in food, energy and financial markets. Detailed monitoring by UN DESA is ongoing and will allow for the tracking of impacts and vulnerabilities of LDCs and other developing countries in the near-time, highlighting the widespread negative impacts while accounting for significant heterogeneities. The result of the on-going monitoring are available on the [web](#).





### **Building productive capacities in LDCs, LLDCs, SIDS and MICs**

The opportunities, challenges, key policies and investments needed to build productive capacities in LDCs, LLDCs, SIDS and middle-income countries (MICs) were discussed at the joint meeting of the General Assembly and ECOSOC in October 2021. The joint meeting, organized with the support of UN DESA and UNCTAD, was presided over by the Chair of the Second Committee and the President of the ECOSOC. Building productive capacities in these groups of countries was considered as critical step for recovering better, accelerating economic growth, addressing persisting vulnerabilities and getting back on track towards achieving the SDGs. The joint meeting also explored innovative solutions, key interventions and enabling policies to facilitate and augment the long-term resilience of LDCs, LLDCs, SIDS and MICs to future shocks through building productive capacities.

### **Recognizing public service innovations to help the world recover better from COVID-19**

UN DESA recognized ten initiatives in 2022 for their innovative public service delivery with the prestigious UN Public Service Awards. The UN Public Service Awards recognize excellence in public service delivery that promotes effectiveness, transparency, and inclusiveness to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals. The 2022 UN Public Service Award winners were announced by the UN Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs, during a virtual event to commemorate UN Public Service Day.

In 2022, a new category on institutional resilience and innovative responses to COVID-19 was introduced to highlight the immense efforts and good practices that public institutions have implemented to fight COVID-19 and contain the social and economic fallout from the pandemic. Under this special category, four initiatives

were recognized including the Saudi Data and AI Authority of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, for the Tawakkalna App; the Chief Sanitary Inspectorate of the Republic of Poland, for the System of Records of the State Sanitary Inspection (SEPI); the National Authority for Government Innovation of the Republic of Panama, for Panavac19; and the Department of Rural and Community Development of the Republic of Ireland, for the Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme. Other recipients included initiatives from Brazil, Canada, India, the Philippines, Thailand, and Ukraine.

### **Building country-capacity to navigate the pandemic**

UN DESA has developed an e-learning program on the economic and social impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. This engaging series of courses provides government officials, policymakers, and other stakeholders with additional insights to better navigate the challenges posed by the pandemic and develop more effective mitigation policies.

Five thematic courses, each consisting of 3 to 5 modules, cover several issues addressed by UN DESA policy briefs. Topics include:

- Macroeconomic impacts focusing on projections of global and regional contractions;
- The social effects of the pandemic, such as inequalities and the effect on vulnerable groups;
- The need for a better science-policy-society interface, along with more effective governance for crisis response and recovery;
- The differential impacts of COVID-19 on countries in special circumstances; and
- Policy recommendations for mitigating the socioeconomic impacts of COVID-19.

The COVID-19 Social and Economic Impact online learning program is available for free on [DESA's Digital Learning Centre](#).

### **Sharing knowledge and good practices with the public**

Since July 2020, UN DESA has organized its Global Policy Dialogue Series as a way to share with the public solutions to the economic and social impacts of the pandemic. The sessions are dynamic, with the Department using its convening power to bring together thought leaders and its own socioeconomic experts to consider today's major issues in a conversational format that attracts a wide audience. From September 2021 through April 2022, UN DESA organized a "Future of the World" series of Global Policy Dialogues looking ahead to some of the key challenges and opportunities of the coming years, including the Future of Work, Future of Community, Future of Our Planet, Future of Money, Future of Trust in Government, Future of Population Growth and Future of Sustainable Development Financing. In each session, key representatives from the UN system, business, academia, civil society and youth shared their ideas for how we can best prepare now for our common future.