

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS



The effects of the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic have reversed much of the progress made in reducing poverty, with global extreme poverty rising in 2020 for the first time since the Asian financial crisis of the late 1990s. Even before COVID-19, the world was not on track to achieve the goal of ending poverty by 2030, and without immediate and significant action, it will remain beyond reach. The crisis has demonstrated more clearly than ever the importance of disaster preparedness and robust social protection systems. While the number of countries with disaster risk reduction strategies has increased substantially, and many temporary social protection measures have been put in place in response to the pandemic, increased efforts are needed on both fronts to ensure the most vulnerable are protected.

Working poverty disproportionately affects women and youth, and the pandemic is likely to magnify those disparities. However, lockdowns and related public health measures due to COVID-19 have severely affected the informal economy, where the vast majority of the working poor are employed. The related income losses threaten to roll back global progress on reducing working poverty.

Although the gender gap in working poverty globally has narrowed over the years, young workers are twice as likely to be living in poverty as adults, reflecting lower earnings and poorer quality jobs. Since the COVID-19 crisis has had a disproportionate impact on the livelihoods of women and young people, it is likely to exacerbate these longstanding disparities.

Governments have put new social protection measures in place, but most are only temporary. Social protection measures are fundamental to preventing and reducing poverty across the life cycle. The COVID-19 crisis has demonstrated the importance of social protection systems to protect people's health, jobs and incomes, as well as the consequences of high coverage gaps.



Just prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, 650 million people were going hungry, and some 2 billion people were suffering from food insecurity. The crisis has posed additional threats to global food security and nutrition. Disrupted food supply chains and economic slowdowns have affected food systems worldwide and threatened people's access to food. Urgent short-term actions are needed to avert rising hunger, and a transformation of food systems is required to achieve a healthy and sustainable food future for all.

COVID-19 is pushing rising rates of hunger and food insecurity even higher

COVID-19 has had a further and profound impact on hunger and food security, triggered by disruptions in food supply chains, income losses, widening social inequities, an altered food environment and price hikes.

Achieving food security goes beyond the eradication of hunger. Nearly one in three people in the world (2.37 billion) were affected by moderate or severe food insecurity in 2020, an increase of almost 320 million from 2019. Such levels indicate that people are unable to eat a healthy, balanced diet on a regular basis, or that they run out of food and, at worst, go a day or days without eating.

Small-scale food producers constitute the majority of food producers in the 37 countries surveyed; in some countries, they account for up to 91 per cent. Strengthening the resilience and adaptability of these small farmers is critical to reversing the trend towards rising hunger and reducing the share of people living in extreme poverty. Moreover, large-scale producers earn two to three times the annual income of small farmers. In almost all countries surveyed, households headed by men achieve higher labour productivity and earn a larger annual income than those headed by women.

Pandemic-related shocks are likely to trigger a rise in stunting.

Children are considered stunted, or chronically malnourished, when they are too short for their age. The actual number of children affected is likely to be higher due to continued constraints in accessing nutritious diets and essential nutrition services during the pandemic.

The three regions with the highest stunting prevalence were Oceania (excluding Australia and New Zealand) at 41.4 per cent, sub-Saharan Africa (32.3 per cent) and Central and Southern Asia (29.8 per cent). The latter two regions accounted for nearly three quarters of all stunted children globally. Particular attention needs to be focused on these regions since the pandemic is affecting the most vulnerable children disproportionately.



Many health indicators were moving in the right direction before the threat of COVID-19 emerged. Maternal and child health had improved, immunization coverage had increased and communicable diseases had been reduced, although not fast enough to meet those 2030 targets. The pandemic has reversed progress in health and poses major threats beyond the disease itself. About 90 per cent of countries are still reporting one or more disruptions to essential health services, and available data from a few countries show that the pandemic has shortened life expectancy. Not surprisingly, the virus is disproportionately affecting disadvantaged groups.

The pandemic has demonstrated the importance of universal health coverage and multisectoral coordination for health emergency preparedness. Moreover, to design effective pandemic policy interventions, Governments will need to improve and strengthen basic demographic and epidemiological data collection.

[Beyond millions of deaths worldwide, the full toll of the COVID-19 pandemic on health is not yet known](#)

As of June 2021, total reported deaths from COVID-19 reached 3.7 million globally.

For those who survived the virus, COVID-19 may have lingering health effects, including long-term disability due to lung scarring and heart damage, along with mental health issues that could affect individuals for a prolonged period. Indiscriminate use of antibiotics during the pandemic may increase antimicrobial resistance. Although it is still too early for existing data to reflect this impact, the COVID-19 pandemic threatens to reverse years of progress towards improved worldwide health. Evidence from countries indicates that the COVID-19 pandemic has shortened life expectancy.

A decade of progress in reproductive, maternal and child health could be stalled or reversed by the pandemic. Substantial progress has been made towards ending preventable child deaths. The global under-5 mortality rate was halved from 2000 to 2019 – falling from 76 to 38 deaths per 1,000 live births.

Before the pandemic, steady progress had been made in reducing mortality from non-communicable diseases (NCD). Between 2010 and 2019, the probability of dying from any of the four main NCDs (cardiovascular disease, cancer, diabetes and chronic respiratory disease) for people between the ages of 30 and 70 declined from 19.9 per cent to 17.8 per cent.



COVID-19 has wreaked havoc worldwide on children's learning and well-being. Before the pandemic, progress in education was already too slow to achieve Goal 4 by 2030. One year into the crisis, two in three students were still affected by full or partial school closures. One hundred million more children than before fail to demonstrate basic reading skills. The poorest and most vulnerable children are exacerbating longstanding inequalities. Many risk never returning to school; some are forced into child marriage or child labour. Special efforts are required to recover learning losses caused by COVID-19.

Even before COVID-19, the world was not on track to meet reading and mathematics targets. The pandemic is projected to cause an additional 101 million children to fall below the minimum reading proficiency threshold, increasing the total number of students falling behind to 584 million in 2020. Similar declines are observed in the area of mathematics. Progress to ensure that all children complete primary and secondary school has been slow. Large disparities among population groups remain pervasive. Almost half of countries with data did not reach gender parity in primary school completion. Disparities by location and wealth are even more stark: only a third of countries reached parity in primary school completion between rural and urban students, and just one sixth of countries reached parity between students in the poorest and richest households. Continuing education and training are key to improved livelihoods and to developing a labour force resilient to economic shocks and adaptable to technological change. Prior to the pandemic, the average participation rate of youth and adults in formal and non-formal education was only 25 per cent. Gender parity in participation rates was achieved in less than a fifth of the countries.

With schools and workspaces transitioning online due to COVID-19, information and communication (ICT) skills have become critically important. However, available data from 2017–2019 indicate that less than 40 per cent of youth and adults reported performing one of the basic ICT skills in the last three months, such as sending an email with an attachment. Large differences in skill levels are found among various groups and occupations, but relatively smaller gender differences, especially at younger ages.



The social and economic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic have adversely affected progress towards gender equality. Violence against women and girls has intensified; child marriage, on the decline in recent years, is expected to increase; and women have suffered a disproportionate share of job losses and increased care work at home. The pandemic has highlighted the need to act swiftly to address pervasive global gender inequalities. Women have played a central role in the response to COVID-19, as frontline health workers, care providers, and as managers and leaders of recovery efforts. Yet they remain underrepresented in leadership positions, and their rights and priorities are often not explicitly addressed in response and recovery measures. The crisis presents an opportunity to re-shape and rebuild systems, laws, policies and institutions to advance gender equality.

Violence against women persists at unacceptably high levels and has been intensified by the pandemic. Nearly one in three women have been subjected to physical and/or sexual violence at least once since the age of 15, usually by an intimate partner. Intimate partner violence starts early. Over the past decade, the practice of child marriage has declined significantly, with the global proportion of young women who were married as children decreasing: as a result, the marriages of some 25 million girls have been averted. However, the profound effects of the COVID-19 pandemic are putting girls at higher risk of early marriage due to a combination of economic shocks, school closures and interruptions in reproductive health services. On an average day, women spend about 2.5 times as many hours on unpaid domestic work and care work as men. Both women and men have increased their unpaid workloads during the crisis, but women are doing a disproportionate share. Moreover, more women than men are leaving the workforce to provide childcare. The pandemic has exacerbated gender inequalities and threatens to undermine progress on women's empowerment. However, as of 1 January 2021, women's representation was far from parity: the global average of women in single or lower chambers of national parliaments was only 25.6 per cent, and 36.3 per cent in local deliberative bodies, continuing a slow upward trend. At the current rate, it will take no fewer than 40 years to achieve gender parity in national parliaments.



Billions of people around the globe live without safely managed drinking water, sanitation and hygiene services. COVID-19 has underscored the need for universal access to these services to combat the pandemic and promote a healthy, green and sustainable recovery.

Water is required across all sectors of society to produce food, energy, goods and services. Over the last century, global water use has increased at more than twice the rate of population growth. Many water sources are drying up, becoming more polluted or both. In addition to water stress and water pollution, countries are facing growing challenges linked to degraded water-related ecosystems, water scarcity caused by climate change, underinvestment in water and sanitation, and insufficient cooperation on transboundary waters. The world is not on track to achieve Goal 6. A dramatic acceleration in current rates of progress and integrated and holistic approaches to water management are badly needed.

Between 2015 and 2020, the proportion of the global population using safely managed drinking water services increased from 70.2 per cent to 74.3 per cent. Despite this progress, another 2 billion people still lacked safely managed drinking water in 2020.

The proportion of the global population using safely managed sanitation services increased from 47.1 per cent in 2015 to 54 per cent in 2020.

The proportion of the global population with basic hygiene rose, this means that, at the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, 2.3 billion people worldwide still lacked a basic handwashing facility with soap and water at home, and 670 million had no facility at all.

Universal access to water, sanitation and hygiene services goes well beyond household use. To ensure that we build back better from the COVID-19 crisis, Governments will need to accelerate their efforts to ensure access to drinking water, sanitation and hygiene for all. When a country or territory withdraws 25 per cent or more of its renewable freshwater resources, it is water stressed. This challenge affects countries on every continent. In 2018, 2.3 billion people lived in water-stressed countries.

Improving water-use efficiency is one key to reducing water stress. All economic sectors have seen their water-use efficiency improve since 2015, with a 15 per cent increase in industry, 8 per cent in agriculture and 8 per cent in the service sector. More concrete measures are needed to save water and increase water-use efficiency, particularly in those regions that have or are close to having a high to critical level of water stress.



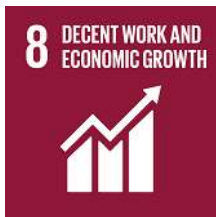
Over the last decade, access to electricity has expanded, use of renewable energy in the electricity sector has increased, and energy efficiency has improved. Still, millions of people are without electricity, and one third of the global population lack clean cooking fuels and technologies. Progress in ensuring energy access has been uneven across regions, leaving the most vulnerable even further behind.

The pandemic is reversing progress and causing millions of people to lose access to electricity. Moreover, depressed oil and gas prices are likely to discourage uptake of clean energy technologies. On the positive side, lower fossil fuel prices provide an opportunity for governments to reform fossil fuel subsidies. Stimulus plans designed to boost economic growth, protect workers and create jobs could scale up the deployment of clean energy technologies.

The global electricity access rate improved from 83 per cent in 2010 to 90 per cent in 2019, with 1.1 billion people receiving electricity for the first time. However, 759 million people were still without access in 2019.

The COVID-19 pandemic could reverse progress in some countries. In Africa, the number of people without electricity increased in 2020 after declining over the previous six years. In developing countries in Africa and Asia, basic electricity services are now unaffordable for more than 25 million people who had previously gained access. An additional 85 million people, mainly in developing countries in Asia, may be forced to scale back to basic electricity access because of an inability to pay for an extended bundle of services. The share of renewable energy in total final energy consumption gradually increased to 17.1 per cent in 2018, up from 16.4 in 2010. The main contribution came from the electricity sector, where the share of renewables now exceeds 25 per cent. Nonetheless, electricity makes up only around 21 per cent of final energy use. The remaining portion is concentrated in the heat and transport sectors, where, in 2018, modern renewables penetrated 9.2 per cent and 3.4 per cent of the global market, respectively. Traditional uses of biomass – such as the burning of wood for heat – still account for almost 14 per cent of global heat consumption.

Excluding traditional uses of biomass, Latin America and the Caribbean shows the highest share of modern renewable energy in total final energy consumption. This is largely due to significant hydropower generation, and to the use of bioenergy in industrial processes and biofuels for transport. In 2018, more than a third of the global annual increase in modern renewable energy consumption took place in Eastern Asia, where wind- and solar-generated electricity dominated growth.



Even before the pandemic hit, global economic growth had slowed. The COVID-19 crisis disrupted economic activities around the world and caused the worst recession since the Great Depression. In 2020, 8.8 per cent of global working hours were lost (relative to the fourth quarter of 2019), equivalent to 255 million full-time jobs – about four times the number lost during the global financial crisis in 2009. The pandemic has put workers in informal employment at risk, as they lack protection against illness or lockdowns. Young workers and women have been particularly affected by the crisis. With the roll-out of COVID-19 vaccines and continued fiscal and monetary support, the United States of America and China are expected to experience strong growth in 2021. However, for many other countries, economic growth will remain below pre-pandemic trends for a prolonged period

The global economy grew by an average of about 2 per cent from 2014 to 2018. With the roll-out of vaccines and government aid, a global economic recovery is under way, led by China and the United States. However, for many countries, economic growth is not expected to return to pre-pandemic levels until 2022 or 2023.

Youth and women were especially hard hit, with employment losses of 8.7 per cent and 5.0 per cent, respectively, in 2020, compared with 3.7 per cent for adults and 3.9 per cent for men. Before the pandemic, the unemployment rate of youth was already three times that of adults. During the crisis, women were more likely than men to drop out of the labour force in order to care for children. This further increased longstanding gender gaps in labour force participation rates. Before the pandemic, informal employment represented 60.2 per cent of global employment. This means that 2 billion people worldwide worked in jobs characterized by lack of basic protection, including social protection coverage. The share is much higher in LDCs, where the proportion of informal employment in total employment was 88.7 per cent in 2019. Globally, the share of informal employment was 90.7 per cent in the agriculture sector, compared with 48.9 per cent in the non-agricultural sector. Estimates suggest that three quarters of informal economy workers (1.6 billion) were significantly affected by lockdown measures and/or were working in the hardest-hit sectors. Among them, women were overrepresented in so-called high-risk sectors: 42 per cent of women workers were engaged in those sectors, compared with 32 per cent of men. These workers face a high risk of falling into poverty and will experience greater challenges in regaining their livelihoods during the recovery.



Due to tariffs and trade tensions between the world's dominant economies, global manufacturing growth was already in decline before the COVID-19 pandemic. When it struck, the movement of people and goods was restricted, disrupting global value chains, as well as the global manufacturing and transport industries. Small-scale industries in particular have been severely affected. The lack of resilient infrastructure, information and communication technologies, and basic services limits a country's ability to perform and adjust to shocks. For the global community to achieve Goal 9, industrialization, improvements in infrastructure, and the promotion of technological innovation by increasing investment in research and development are key

The pandemic hit the manufacturing sector harder than during the 2007–2009 global financial crisis, resulting in a drop in production of 6.8 per cent in 2020. The year 2020 was catastrophic for air travel demand. As a result, jobs supported by the air transport industry fell by 52.5 per cent over the course of 2020 – from 87.7 million to 41.7 million. Airline financial losses are projected at \$371 billion in 2020, with an extra \$115 billion and \$13 billion in losses for airports and air navigation services providers, respectively.

A constantly changing list of open- and closed-destination countries has added a level of uncertainty. Air transport is not projected to get back to pre-pandemic levels until 2024. Governments should coordinate and do what they can to bolster the air transport industry to restore lost jobs and get the global economy back on track.

The importance of investing in research and development (R&D) has never been more apparent. The rapid development of COVID-19 vaccines demonstrates the critical role of innovation in unexpected crises.

The pandemic is not the only crisis the world is facing, and it will not be the last. Policy commitments towards financing for R&D, especially in developing economies, need to continue and be strengthened.



Before the COVID-19 pandemic, various measures of inequality were moving in the right direction. Income inequality had fallen in some countries. Low-income countries continued to benefit from preferential trade status. The transaction costs of remittances were going down. Most countries with available data had policies that facilitated orderly, safe and responsible migration. However, inequality persists, whether in income, wealth, opportunities or other dimensions. Those considered vulnerable also face multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination. The pandemic is exacerbating existing inequalities within and among countries and hitting the most vulnerable people and the poorest countries hardest. Tackling inequality will be crucial for reducing vulnerability to health and other emergencies and for enhancing the resilience of societies.

Despite thousands of migrant deaths each year, not all countries have comprehensive policies on migration

Even with mobility restrictions on borders around the world due to COVID-19, tens of thousands of people continue to leave their homes and embark on dangerous journeys across deserts and seas. In 2020, 4,186 deaths and disappearances were recorded on migratory routes worldwide. Though this is fewer than in previous years, some routes saw an increase in fatalities. The true number of deaths globally may be higher, as the pandemic has increased the challenges to collecting this data. The latest figures show that, as of 2019, just 54 per cent of countries had a comprehensive set of policy measures to facilitate orderly, safe, regular and responsible migration and mobility of people, based on the 111 countries with available data.

Income inequality has been going down since the 2008 global financial crisis; the pandemic could reverse that trend



Cities in many countries have become epicentres of COVID-19, exposing their vulnerabilities stemming from lack of adequate and affordable housing, insufficient public health systems, and inadequate urban infrastructure such as water, sanitation and waste services, public transport and open public spaces. Deeply rooted inequalities have led to disproportionate pandemic-related impacts on migrants, the homeless, and those living in urban slums and informal settlements. That said, in responding to the crisis, some cities have emerged as engines of economic recovery, centres of innovation and catalysts for social and economic transformation

Between 2014 and 2018, the proportion of the urban population living in slums worldwide increased from 23 per cent to 24 per cent, translating to over 1 billion slum dwellers. The needs and concerns of these people are rarely taken into account in conventional urban planning, financing and policymaking, leaving an enormous segment of the global population behind.

The pandemic has disproportionately affected low-income households and those working in the informal sector. This has further increased the number of slum dwellers and those whose living conditions have deteriorated, making them even more vulnerable. Without concerted action on the part of Governments at all levels, in collaboration with civil society and development partners, the number of slum dwellers will continue to rise in most developing countries. Poorly planned and managed urbanization translates to a disconnect between the provision of infrastructure and residential concentrations, leading to inadequate networks of streets and a lack of reliable transport systems. This diminishes the potential of cities to leverage economies of scale and agglomeration

Access to public transport was significantly disrupted during the pandemic – from partial closures and guidelines on reduced capacities to total network closures. As the pandemic response continues, countries and cities need to provide options for accessible, safe, reliable and sustainable public transport systems. Such systems should be well-integrated with walking and cycling paths through long-term policies, sustainable urban mobility plans and targeted investments.



A growing global population combined with the unsustainable use of natural resources is having a devastating impact on our planet – propelling climate change, destroying nature and raising pollution levels. About 14 per cent of the world’s food is lost along the supply chain prior to the retail level. Around the world, 1 million plastic drinking bottles are purchased every minute, and 5 trillion single-use plastic bags are thrown away each year.

Today, we have a historic window of opportunity to design a transformative COVID-19 recovery strategy to build sustainable and resilient economies and societies. It is time to fully embrace the decoupling of economic growth from environmental degradation, a reduction in carbon emissions, improvements in resource efficiency, and the promotion of sustainable lifestyles.

Globally, domestic material consumption per capita, the total amount of materials directly used by an economy to meet its consumption needs, rose by more than 40 per cent from 2000 to 2017. All regions except Europe and Northern America and Australia and New Zealand experienced significant increases over the past two decades. Rising domestic material consumption in developing regions is mainly due to industrialization, including the outsourcing of material-intensive production from developed regions. Natural resource use and related benefits, along with environmental impacts, are unevenly distributed across countries and regions. A path for sustainable consumption and production requires circular economy approaches. Shifting to sustainable consumption and production patterns is a prerequisite to addressing global crises, including climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution, and is central to achieving sustainable development. There is a positive trend in the development of national instruments and strategies aimed at supporting this shift. By 2020, 83 countries and the European Union reported a total of 700 policies and implementation activities under the 10-Year Framework of Programmes on Sustainable Consumption and Production. However, only 50 policies and implementation activities were reported in sub-Saharan Africa, compared with 374 in Europe and Northern America.

As of December 2020, 40 countries had reported on sustainable public procurement policies or action plans (or equivalent legal dispositions), which encourage the procurement of environmentally sound, energy-efficient products, and promote more socially responsible purchasing practices and sustainable supply chains.



Despite a pandemic-related economic slowdown, the climate crisis continues largely unabated. A temporary reduction in human activities resulted in a dip in emissions. However, concentrations of greenhouse gases continued to increase in 2020, reaching new record highs. It was one of the three warmest years on record, with the global average temperature about 1.2°C above the 1850–1900 baseline. In the face of looming catastrophe, climate action is gaining momentum.

The global pandemic has laid bare humanity's vulnerabilities. It has shown the world how much damage can be wreaked by a crisis that pales in comparison to a full-scale climate emergency. We must heed this wake-up call and seize the opportunity to rebuild in a way that will reduce emissions and increase resilience to climate change.

Greenhouse gas emissions will continue to increase without critical steps to shift economies towards carbon neutrality. The COVID-19 pandemic significantly reduced human activities in 2020, leading to a temporary fall in CO₂ emissions. Developed countries saw the steepest declines, averaging drops of almost 10 per cent.

As the world recovers from the pandemic, emissions are expected to rise further unless critical steps are taken to shift economies towards carbon neutrality. The voluntary efforts countries are making to reduce national emissions and adapt to the impacts of climate change are described in their nationally determined contributions (NDCs).

An increasing number of countries are also prioritizing the formulation and implementation of national adaptation plans to boost their efforts to adjust to a changing climate. These include building flood defences, setting up early warning systems for cyclones, or switching to drought-resistant crops. As of May 2021, 125 of 154 developing countries were in the process of formulating and implementing national adaptation plans, and 22 countries have submitted their plans to the Framework Convention on Climate Change secretariat. Developed countries are stepping up their efforts to provide technical guidance and support to LDCs – which are particularly vulnerable to the effects of climate change – to develop and carry out such plans.



More than 3 billion people rely on the ocean for their livelihoods, and over 80 per cent of world merchandise trade is carried out by sea. Oceans contribute to poverty eradication, sustained economic growth and food security. However, the benefits they provide are increasingly undermined by human activities. Rising CO₂ emissions are driving ocean warming, acidification and deoxygenation, which threaten marine ecosystems and the people who depend on them, and are overwhelming the capacity of oceans to moderate climate change. Overfishing depletes fish stocks, a third of which are already overexploited. Land-based pollutants, including plastic pollution and nutrient and sewage runoff, adversely affect coastal habitats and communities. These changes have long-term repercussions that require urgent scaling up of protection of marine environments, investment in ocean science, and support for small-scale fishing communities and the sustainable management of the oceans.

The extent of marine protected areas has increased significantly, with 2020 coverage reaching 7.74 per cent of global coastal waters and oceans. The 10 per cent target set for 2020 may still be met, because several sites planned for designation in 2020 were delayed. Between 2000 and 2020, the mean percentage of key biodiversity areas (KBAs) covered by protected areas grew from 28 per cent to 44 per cent. However, increases have risen by only 1 percentage point over the last five years. On average, over half of each KBA remains outside of any form of protection.

Safeguarding KBAs remains crucial to the sustainability of oceans. A recent example from the South Atlantic used satellite tracking data for 14 species of seabirds and seals to pinpoint breeding grounds and feeding sites crucial to the preservation of these and other species. This information was used to revise the management of a marine protected area by extending the closure of fisheries by two months and expanding several permanent no-fishing zones, while allowing commercial fishing to occur in a regulated manner.



Ending environmental decline and restoring our planet is fundamental to sustainable development. Nevertheless, forests are being cut down, biological diversity is declining, and terrestrial ecosystems are being degraded at alarming rates, with profound consequences for human survival and well-being. Land degradation now affects one fifth of the Earth's land area. The COVID-19 pandemic has reminded us that by threatening biodiversity, humanity threatens its own survival.

To address these challenges, considerable efforts are being made to expand sustainable forest management and to protect sites critical to biodiversity. Countries are also enacting legislation and accounting principles to make nature "count" and to address threats to biodiversity, such as the growing spread of invasive alien species. It is time to put the health of the planet at the centre of all our plans and policies.

More than one quarter of the species assessed for the IUCN Red List are threatened with extinction

Human activities are causing biodiversity to decline faster than at any other time in human history. The world has fallen short on its 2020 targets to halt biodiversity loss. The Red List Index of the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), which monitors the overall extinction risk for various species, shows a 10 per cent decline since 1993.

Fortunately, conservation actions could stave off further species losses. For example, many bird and mammal species have benefited from invasive species control, conservation in zoos and other collections, and site protection. Since 1993, conservation actions have prevented the extinction of 21 to 32 species of birds and 7 to 16 species of mammals.

Considering that 10 bird and 5 mammal species were confirmed or suspected to have been driven to extinction over this period, such actions have reduced extinction rates by three to four times compared with what would have been anticipated



The world is still a long way from achieving the goal of peaceful, just and inclusive societies. Hundreds of millions of people are living in fragile and conflict-affected States. At the end of 2020, about 1 per cent of the global population had been forcibly displaced as a result of persecution, conflict or generalized violence. The COVID-19 pandemic has exposed and intensified inequality and discrimination. In fact, the crisis has created major disruptions in government functioning and has tested, weakened and sometimes even shattered countries' systems of rights and protection. The pandemic is disproportionately affecting the most vulnerable worldwide, with children at high risk. Recovery from the crisis and sustainable development must be built on a foundation of peace, stability, respect for human rights, effective governance and the rule of law.

The pandemic is intensifying children's risk of exploitation, including trafficking and child labour. Millions of children around the globe face different forms of exploitation, including trafficking and child labour. The risk to children is increasing due to the combined effects of pandemic-related school closures and economic distress. Trafficking in persons is found in every country. Perpetrators engaged in this criminal activity target the marginalized and impoverished, including children. Globally, one in three trafficking victims detected in 2018 were a child; in low-income countries, the share was one half. Girls are primarily victims of sexual exploitation (72 per cent of detected girl victims), while boys are mainly subjected to forced labour (66 per cent of detected boy victims). Previous economic crises suggest that the sharp increase in adult unemployment rates and an asymmetric global recovery from COVID-19 is likely to increase the risk of trafficking. Therefore, in all countries, investments in job creation for adults and young people of legal working age, along with economic recovery, could reduce risks to children of various forms of exploitation.



The pandemic is further testing multilateral and global partnerships that were already shaky. Although official development assistance (ODA) increased and remittance flows declined less than expected in 2020, foreign direct investment (FDI) dropped by 40 per cent. The impacts of the pandemic are leading to debt distress in many countries, and also limiting countries' fiscal and policy space for critical investments in recovery (including access to vaccines), climate action and the SDGs, threatening to prolong recovery periods. The interconnected global economy requires a global response to ensure that all countries, developing countries in particular, can address compounding and parallel health, economic and environmental crises and recover better. Strengthening multilateralism and global partnerships is more important than ever.

Foreign aid reached an all-time high during the crisis, but donors are still not living up to their commitments. Net ODA flows by member countries of the Development Assistance Committee of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development reached \$161 billion in 2020, an increase of 7 per cent in real terms from 2019, driven by members' support of an inclusive global recovery in light of the pandemic and an increase in bilateral sovereign lending by some loan-giving members. Net ODA flows represented 0.32 per cent of donors' combined gross national income (GNI) in 2020, falling short of the 0.7 per cent target. Most members were able to maintain their planned ODA commitments, and some were able to rapidly mobilize additional funding. But more is needed to respond to the COVID-19 crisis.

Net bilateral flows to low-income countries were \$25 billion, a decrease of 3.5 per cent in real terms compared with 2019. Net bilateral ODA increased by 6.9 per cent to lower-middle-income countries, and by 36.1 per cent to upper-middle-income countries, reaching \$33 billion and \$18 billion, respectively.