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## Urgent Reform of the United Nations Can Restore Global Progress on the Sustainable Development Goals

**Ahead of the UN Summit of the Future in September 2024, a new SDSN report calls for a United Nations 2.0 to strengthen global cooperation and financing for sustainable development**

**Paris, France, 17 June 2024.** None of the seventeen Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are on track to be achieved by 2030, and only an estimated 16% of the SDG targets are progressing, reveals the 9<sup>th</sup> edition of the Sustainable Development Report (SDR) released today by the UN Sustainable Development Solutions Network (SDSN). The first report's chapter, endorsed by 100+ leading scientists and practitioners worldwide, identifies priorities to upgrade the United Nations to meet the great challenges of the 21st Century and achieve sustainable development, including five strategies to address the chronic shortfalls in SDG financing. Published each year since 2016, the global edition of the SDR includes the SDG Index and Dashboards ranking the performance of all UN Member States on the SDGs. In addition to the SDG Index, this year's edition includes a new Index of countries' support for UN-based multilateralism covering all 193 UN Member States and new FABLE pathways demonstrating how to achieve sustainable food and land systems by mid-century.

**Professor Jeffrey D. Sachs**, President of the SDSN and a lead author of the report, emphasizes the following:

*"Midway between the founding of the UN in 1945 and the year 2100, we cannot rely on business as usual. The world faces great global challenges, including dire ecological crises, widening inequalities, disruptive and potentially hazardous technologies, and deadly conflicts, we are at a crossroads. Ahead of the UN's Summit of the Future, the international community must take stock of the vital accomplishments and the limitations of the United Nations system, and work toward upgrading multilateralism for the decades ahead."*

The report is available online from 16 June 2024 at 23:59 pm CET.

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Website: <https://sdgtransformationcenter.org/>

This year's SDR highlights **five key findings**:

**1. On average, globally, only 16% of the SDG targets are on track to be achieved by 2030, with the remaining 84% demonstrating limited or a reversal of progress.** At the global level, SDG progress has been stagnant since 2020, with SDG 2 (Zero Hunger), SDG11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities), SDG14 (Life Below Water), SDG15 (Life on Land) and SDG16 (Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions) particularly off-track. Globally, the five SDG targets on which the highest proportion of countries show a reversal of progress since 2015 include: obesity rate (under SDG 2),

press freedom (under SDG 16), the red list index (under SDG 15), sustainable nitrogen management (under SDG 2), and – due in a large part to the COVID-19 pandemic and other factors that may vary across countries – life expectancy at birth (under SDG 3). Goals and targets related to basic access to infrastructure and services, including SDG9 (Industry, Innovation, and Infrastructure), show slightly more positive trends, although progress remains too slow and uneven across countries.

**2. The pace of SDG progress varies significantly across country groups. Nordic countries continue to lead on SDG achievement, with BRICS demonstrating strong progress and poor and vulnerable nations lagging far behind.** Similar to past years, European countries – notably Nordic countries – top the 2024 SDG Index. Finland ranks number 1 on the SDG Index, followed by Sweden (#2), Denmark (#3), Germany (#4), and France (#5). Yet, even these countries face significant challenges in achieving several SDGs. Average SDG progress in BRICS (Brazil, the Russian Federation, India, China, and South Africa) and BRICS+ (Egypt, Ethiopia, Iran, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates) since 2015 has been faster than the world average. In addition, East and South Asia has emerged as the region that has made the most SDG progress since 2015. By contrast, the gap between the world average SDG Index and the performance of the poorest and most vulnerable countries, including Small Island Developing States (SIDS), has widened since 2015.

**3. Sustainable development remains a long-term investment challenge. Reforming the Global Financial Architecture is more urgent than ever.** The world requires many essential public goods that far transcend the nation-state. Low-income countries (LICs) and lower-middle-income countries (LMICs) urgently need to gain access to affordable long-term capital so that they can invest at scale to achieve their sustainable development objectives. Mobilizing the necessary levels of finance will require new institutions, new forms of global financing — including global taxation —, and new priorities for global financing, such as investing in quality education for all. The report presents five complementary strategies to reform the Global Financial Architecture.

**4. Global challenges require global cooperation. Barbados ranks the highest in its commitment to UN-based multilateralism; the United States ranks last.** As with the challenge of SDGs, strengthening multilateralism requires metrics and monitoring. The report's new Index of countries' support to UN-based multilateralism (UN-Mi) ranks countries based on their engagement with the UN system including treaty ratification, votes at the UN General Assembly, membership in UN organizations, participation in conflicts and militarization, use of unilateral sanctions and financial contributions to the UN. The five countries most committed to UN-based multilateralism are: Barbados (#1), Antigua and Barbuda (#2), Uruguay (#3), Mauritius (#4), and the Maldives (#5). By contrast, the United States (#193), Somalia (#192), South Sudan (#191), Israel (#190), and the Democratic Republic of Korea (#189) rank the lowest on the UN-Mi.

**5. SDG targets related to food and land systems are particularly off-track. The SDR presents new FABLE pathways to support sustainable food and land systems.** Globally, 600 million people will still suffer from hunger by 2030, obesity is increasing globally, and greenhouse gas emissions from Agriculture, Forestry, and Other Land Use (AFOLU) represent almost a quarter of annual global GHG emissions. The new FABLE pathways brought together more than 80 local researchers across 22 countries to assess how 16 targets related to food security, climate mitigation, biodiversity conservation, and water quality could be achieved by 2030 and 2050. The continuation of current trends widens the gap with targets related to climate mitigation, biodiversity, and water quality. Pursuing commitments that have been already taken by countries would improve the situation,

but they are still largely insufficient. Significant progress is possible but requires several dramatic changes: 1) avoid overconsumption beyond recommended levels and limit animal-based protein consumption with dietary shifts compatible with cultural preferences; 2) invest to foster productivity, particularly for products and areas with strong demand growth; and 3) implement inclusive, robust, and transparent monitoring systems to halt deforestation. Our sustainable pathway avoids up to 100 million hectares of deforestation by 2030 and 100 Gt CO<sub>2</sub> emissions by 2050. Additional measures would be needed to avoid trade-offs with on-farm employment and water pollution due to excessive fertilizer application and ensure that no one is left behind, particularly to end hunger.

Since 2016, the global edition of the SDR has provided the most up-to-date data to track and rank the performance of all UN Member States on the SDGs. The report was written by a group of independent experts at the SDG Transformation Center, an initiative of the SDSN, led by SDSN's President, Professor Jeffrey Sachs, and coordinated by its Vice President, Guillaume Lafortune.

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## **About SDSN**

*The UN Sustainable Development Solutions Network (SDSN) has been operating since 2012 under the auspices of the UN Secretary-General. SDSN mobilizes global scientific and technological expertise to promote practical solutions for sustainable development, including the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the Paris Climate Agreement. We aim to accelerate joint learning and promote integrated approaches that address the interconnected economic, social, and environmental challenges confronting the world. One of SDSN's flagship initiatives is the SDG Transformation Center, which produces the SDR and provides science-based tools and analytics for SDG pathways, policies, and financing. For more information visit [www.unsdsn.org](http://www.unsdsn.org) and <https://sdgtransformationcenter.org/>.*