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## **Accelerated action and transformative pathways: realizing the decade of action and delivery for sustainable development**

### **Report of the Secretary-General**

#### *Summary*

The outbreak of coronavirus disease (COVID-19) has reaffirmed the need to strengthen multilateral cooperation and governance to address global health emergencies and accelerate the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. To advance the decade of action and delivery for sustainable development, the response to the outbreak and its impacts must pursue a series of transformative pathways. The present report presents the accelerated actions required during and beyond the response to the disease along two such pathways: reducing income inequality and eradicating extreme poverty while reducing carbon dioxide emissions to limit global warming to 1.5°C. The report serves to inform the high-level segment of the Economic and Social Council, to be held in July 2020. It is complemented by the report of the Secretary-General on long-term future scenarios and the impact of current trends on the realization of the Sustainable Development Goals ([E/2020/60](#)).



## I. Introduction

1. In accordance with the mandate provided by the General Assembly in its resolutions 61/16 and 72/305 and the theme of “accelerated action and transformative pathways: realizing the decade of action and delivery for sustainable development”, in the present report, accelerators are identified for building synergies across economic, social and environmental dimensions, and recommendations are offered to inform the discussions of the high-level segment of the Economic and Social Council. The report was informed by contributions from United Nations system entities and others and is complemented by the report of the Secretary-General on long-term future scenarios and the impact of current trends on the realization of the Sustainable Development Goals (E/2020/60).

2. The high-level political forum on sustainable development of 2019, convened under the auspices of the Economic and Social Council, completed the first four-year cycle of follow-up and review of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The first cycle included voluntary national reviews presented by 142 countries on progress towards the Goals and culminated in the Sustainable Development Goals Summit, held at the level of Heads of State and Government in September 2019, when the high-level political forum on sustainable development met under the auspices of the General Assembly.

3. At the Summit, it was noted that there had been progress in important areas of implementation of the Goals.<sup>1</sup> For example, extreme poverty and child mortality continue to fall, and hepatitis is on the retreat, with new chronic hepatitis B viral infections approaching zero. Access to safe drinking water and electricity has increased, and the proportion of the urban population living in slums is falling, while the coverage of protected terrestrial and marine areas has been expanded and improved. Many countries have incorporated the Goals into their national development plans and strategies and established structures and mechanisms to facilitate the coherent implementation and active participation of a wide range of stakeholders. Some countries have also linked the Goals to their national or local budget.

4. It was noted at the Summit that, notwithstanding those successes, the world was not on track to achieve most of the 169 targets that the Goals comprise, in particular the 21 targets designated for implementation by 2020. In addition, recent trends in areas with cross-cutting impacts across the entire 2030 Agenda, such as rising inequality, climate change, hunger and food insecurity, biodiversity loss and waste from human activity, threaten the aspirations of universal human well-being embedded in the Goals. A slowdown in global economic growth, rising debt levels in many countries and a lack of adequate financing are other factors impeding progress in the implementation of the Goals.

5. More recently, the outbreak of coronavirus disease (COVID-19) has had devastating impacts on people’s lives and well-being. The outbreak has also increased global economic risks that could have a negative impact on the implementation of the Goals, in particular in the short term. The Department of Economic and Social Affairs, using a World Economic Forecasting Model, has estimated that global economic growth in 2020 could be reduced from a baseline scenario of 2.5 per cent to -3.2 per cent because of the pandemic.<sup>2</sup> In the worst-case scenario, global output would contract by 4.9 per cent. In comparison, the world economy contracted by 1.7 per cent

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<sup>1</sup> See Independent Group of Scientists appointed by the Secretary-General, *Global Sustainable Development Report 2019: the Future is Now – Science for Achieving Sustainable Development* (New York, United Nations, 2019).

<sup>2</sup> Department of Economic and Social Affairs, United Nations, “World economic situation and prospects, April 2020 briefing, No. 136”, available at [www.un.org/development/desa/dpad/publication/world-economic-situation-and-prospects-april-2020-briefing-no-136/](http://www.un.org/development/desa/dpad/publication/world-economic-situation-and-prospects-april-2020-briefing-no-136/).

during the global financial crisis of 2009. The Department's analysis, however, does not reflect the effects that the pandemic may have on global value chains and changes in consumer preferences. The possible economic and social effects of the disease are summarized in the box below.

6. The outbreak highlights the underlying fragilities at the core of the current global economic and social system, which the 2030 Agenda and the Paris Agreement on Climate Change were created to address. In addition, it underscores our interdependence and the need to strengthen multilateral cooperation and governance. Furthermore, it made the task related to the decade of action more challenging and urgent.

7. We now have a triple imperative. First, we must respond urgently to stem the impact of the pandemic and suppress the transmission of the virus. Second, we must work together to help governments and their peoples to safeguard development gains and mitigate the socioeconomic impacts of the pandemic. Third, we must work to ensure that national, regional and global recovery efforts follow the North Star of the 2030 Agenda and the Paris Agreement on Climate Change as a launch pad for a decade of action.

8. The present report provides an outline of the scale of the challenge ahead and contains scenarios for accelerated progress as it relates to two of the fundamental objectives of the 2030 Agenda: ending poverty and avoiding runaway climate change. In addition, the report provides details on the contribution of the United Nations to advancing the decade of action, including in the area of gender equality.

#### **Possible economic and social effects of coronavirus disease**

The pandemic has triggered unprecedented restrictions on both the movement of people and economic activities and put the national health-care systems in many countries under severe strain. More than 100 countries closed their borders in March, bringing the cross-border movement of people and tourism to an almost complete halt. The service sectors in Europe and North America, which account for more than a quarter of all jobs in the two regions, were particularly hard hit. The pandemic has also disrupted global supply chains and international trade, and millions of persons became unemployed within a short period of time. The International Labour Organization has estimated that up to 195 million jobs could be lost because of the outbreak. Its economic implications for developing countries are significant, in particular in terms of reduced trade and investment. Many governments have rolled out large stimulus packages to avert a sharp downturn in economic output, which could plunge the global economy into a deep recession. Many of the stimulus packages have been in excess of 2 per cent of GDP of the respective countries.

The pandemic will not only suppress economic growth but also affect sustainable development adversely. In Africa, the outbreak has put strained health-care systems under further pressure. The most vulnerable, including women, children, older persons and informal workers, are the hardest hit. More than 50 per cent of the world's rural population and more than 20 per cent of the urban population lack health-care coverage, and some 2.2 and 4.2 billion persons do not have access to water and basic sanitation, respectively, making it difficult for them to prevent the virus through ordinary tasks such as cleaning their hands.

*Source:* Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Economic Analysis and Policy Division, 2020.

## II. Transformative pathways to accelerate the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals

9. If countries are to achieve the Goals by 2030, they will need to adopt national implementation strategies that make inclusion, sustainability, resilience and carbon neutrality the core objective of all policies.

10. In the *Global Sustainable Development Report 2019*, a quadrennial publication prepared by a group of 15 independent scientists appointed by the Secretary-General to inform the work of the high-level political forum on sustainable development, six areas, or entry points, are identified that offer great promise in achieving transformation in the implementation of the Goals at the scale and speed necessary: (a) human well-being and capabilities; (b) sustainable and just economies; (c) food systems and nutrition patterns; (d) energy decarbonization with universal access; (e) urban and peri-urban development; and (f) global environmental systems, or commons. It is emphasized in the report that there is no single pathway in each of the six areas that will ensure the successful implementation of the Goals. Countries must instead pursue a combination of policies within and across the areas. The United Nations system has produced detailed briefs on each of the entry points in advance of the 2020 high-level political forum.

11. The present report is focused on two of these, given their overarching nature: the critical role that reduced income inequality can play in amplifying the effects of economic growth in eradicating extreme poverty by 2030 and the high economic, social and environmental benefits of rapid and sustained reductions in carbon dioxide emissions, aligned with the goal to limit the global temperature rise to 1.5°C, which would entail reaching carbon neutrality by 2050.

12. At its twenty-second session, in February 2020, the Committee for Development Policy stressed the importance of addressing the issues of inequality and climate change for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. Current trends in both areas, according to the Committee, are driving the implementation of the 2030 Agenda backwards, with rising inequalities in income and multiple other dimensions of well-being, along with a weak global response to climate change, leaving many people behind. Inequality and climate change are also at the core of the systems of synergies and trade-offs that make up the Goals, and failure to act on them will mean deviation from the path set in the 2030 Agenda.

### A. Advancing sustainable and just economies: making reduction of income inequality a key strategy to eradicate extreme poverty by 2030

13. Progress towards reducing poverty has slowed in recent years, reflecting weak GDP per capita growth in many regions. Nearly 9 per cent of the world's population continues to live on income below the extreme poverty line of \$1.90 per day. The number of persons living in extreme poverty has risen in several African countries where such levels were already very high. Poverty rates have also edged higher in parts of Latin America and the Caribbean, as well as in Western Asia.<sup>3</sup> In the latest projections, it is suggested that, in 2020 alone, the pandemic could lead to up to 49 million persons falling into poverty.

14. Because growth in GDP per capita is expected to remain weak in many countries, the eradication of extreme poverty will need to rely to a greater extent on measures to reduce high levels of income inequality. Poverty can be reduced through an increase in income, changes in the distribution of income or a combination of the two. Poverty

<sup>3</sup> *World Economic Situation and Prospects 2020* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.20.II.C.1).

is very sensitive to changes in the distribution of income in society. Research has shown that a more equitable distribution of income can contribute to faster economic growth as a result of greater spending power of the poor. A reduction in income inequality can thus provide critical momentum towards the global goal of ending extreme poverty by 2030. For this to happen, income inequality must fall globally, but in particular in the more populous countries, where many people are poor.

15. For example, if the 2.5 per cent GDP per capita growth rate in least developed countries in the past 10 years is maintained during the decade of action, income inequality would need to be reduced by 75 per cent to eradicate extreme poverty by 2030. An average annual GDP per capita growth rate of 6 per cent over the remaining decade of the Sustainable Development Goals period would require income inequality to be halved in order to eradicate poverty by 2030. However, the highest observed 10-year reduction in the Gini coefficient is around 30 per cent in several States members of the Commonwealth of Independent States.<sup>4</sup> For non-least developed countries in Africa, eradicating extreme poverty without steep declines in income inequality would require GDP per capita to grow by 8.7 per cent annually during the decade of action, compared with the 0.5 per cent growth recorded in the past decade.<sup>5</sup>

16. The goal of eradicating extreme poverty by 2030 (Goal 1), which is central to achieving many other Goals, is thus unlikely to be reached by 2030 unless strong and sustained growth in GDP per capita is accompanied by a significant reduction in income inequality. According to the estimates of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs in the *2019 Sustainable Development Outlook*, in the period 2000–2013, some two thirds of the world’s population lived in countries that experienced increased income inequality, 10 per cent witnessed no change and 22 per cent saw a decline in the amount thereof. While developing countries have made some headway in reducing income inequality, a more fundamental transformation is needed going forward.

17. Scenarios using the World Economic Forecasting Model of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs illustrate well the magnitude of the challenge that lies ahead,<sup>6</sup> quantifying the relationship between economic growth and a reduction in income inequality and their effects on the eradication of extreme poverty by 2030 through four scenarios (see table 1).

Table 1  
**Interlinkages between economic growth, reduction in income inequality and eradication of poverty in developing countries**

(Percentage)

Scenario	Average annual GDP per capita growth	Projected reduction in income inequality	Share of global population in extreme poverty by 2030	Share of African population in extreme poverty by 2030	Share of population of least developed countries in extreme poverty by 2030
Baseline	3.7	No change	7.7	26.69	36.79
First	6.7	No change	6.2	21.9	31.5
Second	6.7	(25) <sup>a</sup>	4.3	15.78	25.3
“Poverty miracle”	9.7	(50)	3.2	9.5	16.9

Source: Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Economic Analysis and Policy Division (forthcoming).

<sup>a</sup> The decline in inequality is measured as the percentage decline in the standard deviation of log income, as described in *World Economic Situation and Prospects 2020* and François Bourguignon (2003).

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> The scenarios do not fully reflect the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. Their relevance will depend on the duration of the crisis and the extent of the loss of income resulting from it, as well as the speed of the recovery.

18. In the baseline scenario, which is the most likely outcome, a continuation in the Sustainable Development Goals period of the most recent forecast of 3.7 per cent global growth in GDP per capita in developing countries, as well as no change in income inequality, is assumed. In that scenario, roughly 7.7 per cent of the world's population would remain in extreme poverty by 2030, or 653 million persons, including about 26.9 per cent of people living in Africa and 36.9 per cent of those in least developed countries, far off the global ambition.

19. In the first scenario, it is assumed that annual growth in GDP per capita in developing countries rises to 6.7 per cent (an annual increase of 3 percentage points for each country) in the remaining Sustainable Development Goals period, but with income inequality unchanged. In this scenario, the share of the world's population living in extreme poverty by 2030 would decline to about 6.2 per cent, or 523 million persons, from the baseline of 7.7 per cent, and in Africa and least developed countries to 22 to 32 per cent, still well off the global target.

20. The second scenario is based on the projection in the first scenario for the remaining Sustainable Development Goals period of 6.7 per cent growth in GDP per capita, but it assumes a reduction in cumulative income inequality of 25 per cent over the decade in all developing countries. In this scenario, the extreme poverty rate declines to about 4.3 per cent of the world's population, or 364 million persons, and 16 to 25 per cent in both Africa and least developed countries.

21. The "poverty miracle" scenario, which relies on highly ambitious assumptions of 9.7 per cent annual average growth in GDP per capita and a 50 per cent reduction in cumulative income inequality, would lower the number of persons in extreme poverty from 653 million to 230 million by 2030, a decline of 65 per cent. In this scenario, extreme poverty would be eradicated in the Asia and the Pacific and the Latin America and the Caribbean regions and would be concentrated in the Africa region. The Africa region, as a result, would require additional targeted international support for Goal 1 to be achieved by 2030.

22. The four scenarios outlined in table 1 demonstrate that achieving the goal of eradicating extreme poverty by 2030 will require a combination of policies that promote economic growth, income redistribution and international support. For example, the analysis described above shows that global poverty can be lowered to about 3 per cent of the world's population by 2030 if an average annual global economic growth rate of nearly 10 per cent in GDP per capita is achieved and income inequality is reduced by half. That level of ambition would require extraordinary political will on the part of the international community to achieve Goal 1 by 2030. At the same time, the devastating health and economic impact of the pandemic provides a powerful justification for States to use the decade of action to recover better by rebuilding their health-care and social protection systems, which should benefit people who live in poverty. The decade of action could also be a time to make major investments in sustainable development and climate-related infrastructure, which would improve the well-being of people living in poverty who are hard hit by climate change and other gaps in sustainable development. The promotion of greater economic growth with equity also offers an opportunity to all States to rethink their education, labour market, tax and transfer policies. In addition, donor countries and other development partners could significantly increase poverty-focused development assistance to the countries most at risk of not achieving Goal 1 by 2030.

**B. Energy decarbonization with universal access: committing to rapid and sustained carbon dioxide reduction during the decade of action by at least 45 per cent in 2030 (below 2010 levels) and reaching net zero carbon dioxide emissions by 2050 at the latest**

23. According to a 2018 special report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change on the impacts of global warming of 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels, human activities are estimated to have caused approximately 1°C of global warming above pre-industrial levels by 2017. Global warming will reach and overshoot 1.5°C between 2030 and 2050 if current trends continue. As is also highlighted in the report, climate-related risks for natural and human systems in a 1.5°C average global temperature rise scenario are significantly lower than in a 2°C scenario. Exposure to risk is highly asymmetrical and depends on the magnitude and rate of warming, geographic location, levels of development and vulnerability and the effective implementation of adaptation and mitigation strategies or the lack thereof.

24. Anthropogenic greenhouse gas emissions have already irreversibly altered the global climate system, compared with pre-industrial levels. They include increases in mean temperature in most land and ocean regions, hot extremes, heavy precipitation and floods and a higher probability of drought and precipitation. By 2100, global sea level rise is projected to be around one metre lower, with global warming of 1.5°C, compared with 2°C. Sea level rise is also expected to continue well beyond 2100, and its magnitude will depend on the emission pathways pursued by countries.

25. Limiting the global temperature rise to 1.5°C is projected to lower impacts on global public goods such as biodiversity and terrestrial, freshwater and coastal ecosystems, as well as retain more of their services to humans. Restricting global warming to 1.5°C is also projected to reduce increases in ocean temperature as well as associated rise in ocean acidity and decreases in ocean oxygen levels. Consequently, ensuring that global warming does not exceed 1.5°C is expected to reduce risks to marine biodiversity, fisheries and all types of ecosystems and their functions and services to humans. Certain population groups in particular are at higher risk of adverse consequences of global warming of 1.5°C and higher. These include disadvantaged and vulnerable populations, indigenous peoples and local communities dependent on agricultural and coastal livelihoods. Regions at disproportionately higher risk include the Arctic ecosystem, dryland regions, small island developing States and least developed countries.

26. According to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change report, various pathways can achieve the net emissions reductions necessary to limit global warming to 1.5°C.

27. In the report, four scenarios are highlighted that would enable countries to achieve net zero emissions by 2050 and limit global warming to 1.5°C with no or limited overshoot, but applying different policies. Select drivers of the four scenarios are presented in table 2.

Table 2  
**Select scenario drivers by 2030**

(Percentage)

	<i>First scenario</i>	<i>Second scenario</i>	<i>Third scenario</i>	<i>Fourth scenario</i>
Carbon dioxide emissions	(58)	(47)	(41)	4
Coal share in energy mix	(77)	(61)	(75)	(59)
Nuclear share in energy mix	59	83	98	106

	<i>First scenario</i>	<i>Second scenario</i>	<i>Third scenario</i>	<i>Fourth scenario</i>
Renewable energy in electricity production	60	58	48	25
Methane emissions from agriculture	(24)	(48)	1	14
Carbon dioxide removal	Afforestation	Small use of carbon capture and storage	Very high use of carbon capture and storage	Exceptionally high use of carbon capture and storage

*Source: Global warming of 1.5°C: An Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change Special Report on the impacts of global warming of 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels and related global greenhouse gas emission pathways, in the context of strengthening the global response to the threat of climate change, sustainable development and efforts to eradicate poverty, 2018.*

28. In the first scenario, social, business and technological innovations result in lower energy demand while living standards rise, in particular in the global South. An optimized energy system enables the rapid decarbonization of the energy supply. Afforestation is the only carbon dioxide removal option required, and neither fossil fuels with carbon capture and storage nor bioenergy with carbon capture and storage is used. This scenario entails not only a 58 per cent reduction in carbon dioxide emissions by 2030 and a major decrease in the share of coal in the energy mix but also a commensurate increase in the use of nuclear and renewable energy in electricity production. Reducing methane emissions from agriculture is also an important part of the scenario. The first scenario is focused sharply on ambitious reductions of carbon dioxide emissions during the decade of action, with no carbon capture and storage until 2100.

29. The second scenario is focused broadly on sustainability, including energy intensity, human development, economic convergence and international cooperation, along with a notable shift towards sustainable and healthy consumption patterns and low-carbon technology innovation, as well as well-managed land systems with limited societal acceptability for bioenergy with carbon capture and storage. This scenario is slightly less ambitious than the first one in terms of the speed of carbon dioxide emissions reductions during the decade of action but relies to greater extent on decreased methane emissions in the agricultural sector. The second scenario entails a 47 per cent reduction in carbon dioxide emissions by 2030, a 61 per cent decline in the share of coal in the energy mix and a commensurate increase in the use of nuclear and renewable energy in electricity production.

30. In the third scenario, it is assumed that societal and technological developments follow historical patterns. Emissions reductions are mainly achieved by changing the way in which energy and products are produced, and to a lesser degree by reducing demand. This scenario is based on a slower speed of carbon dioxide emissions reductions during the decade of action, compared with the first two scenarios, or 41 per cent, a doubling in the use of nuclear energy and a 48 per cent increase in the use of renewables in electricity production, along with very heavy reliance on the use of carbon capture and storage as means to remove carbon dioxide from the atmosphere from 2050 onwards.

31. The fourth scenario is a resource- and energy-intensive one, in which economic growth and globalization lead to widespread adoption of greenhouse gas-intensive lifestyles, including high demand for transportation fuels and livestock products. Emissions reductions are achieved mainly through technological means, such as a major use of carbon dioxide removal from 2050 through the deployment of bioenergy with carbon capture and storage. This scenario, like the third one, is based on a major shift towards the use of nuclear as a primary energy source, in particular after 2030, along with heavy reliance on carbon capture and storage. This is the only scenario in which carbon dioxide emissions are projected to increase by 2030, or 4 per cent. At

the same time, primary energy from coal is expected to decline by 59 per cent in this scenario, but the use of nuclear energy would increase by 106 per cent, also by 2030. In this scenario, the share of renewable energy in electricity production is also expected to grow at a much slower rate than in the others, or 25 per cent, by 2030. In addition, the agricultural sector is projected to increase methane emissions by 14 per cent by 2030, a major departure from the first two scenarios.

32. According to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change report, current pathways based on the full implementation of the nationally determined contributions of the parties to the Paris Agreement, will not limit global warming to 1.5°C even if supplemented by very substantial increases in the scale and ambition of emissions reductions after 2030. The current global emissions trajectory thus increases the risk of a considerable overshoot of the target of 1.5°C by 2050, putting the world on a dangerous path, with average temperature rises likely to surpass 3.5°C by the end of the century.

33. Carbon capture and storage technologies, although theoretically promising, have not yet been proven to work at scale and risk being less practical, effective or economical than anticipated. There is also a risk that the use of carbon dioxide removal technologies may end up competing with agriculture, human settlements and natural habitats for land and water, which could affect sustainable development adversely. That implies that global anthropogenic carbon dioxide emissions need to start to decline now and fall by at least 45 per cent by 2030 from their 2010 level in order to achieve net zero emissions by 2050. Ambitious and immediate climate action (the first and second scenarios) is therefore the only viable pathway that limits climate change to 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels; protects people, livelihoods and natural ecosystems; and helps to ensure more sustainable and equitable societies.

34. The economic argument for pursuing ambitious climate action is equally powerful. Many studies illustrate the net benefits of pursuing aggressive decarbonization and resilience-building strategies for local communities, businesses, cities and countries. For example, according to a Stanford University study, limiting climate change to 1.5 rather than 2°C may save the global economy tens of trillions of dollars, with the benefits far exceeding the costs of achieving that global target.<sup>7</sup> By contrast, an increase in average global temperature from 1.5 to 2°C could result in cumulative economic losses amounting to some \$30 trillion by the end of the century. In its report *Global Renewables Outlook 2020*, the International Renewable Energy Agency noted that transforming the energy system by investing in and deploying renewable energy sources at scale could boost cumulative global GDP gains above a business-as-usual scenario by \$98 trillion between now and 2050 and would nearly quadruple renewable energy jobs to \$42 million in that sector alone.<sup>8</sup>

35. Today, the world is not on track achieve a 1.5 °C pathway. All countries, in particular the largest emitters, need to deliver on their existing commitments under the Paris Agreement and urgently scale up nationally determined contributions, develop strategies to reach net zero emissions by 2050, commit themselves to a comprehensive programme of support for climate adaptation and resilience and ensure sufficient financing for a sustainable, just and green economy. Such a low-carbon transition will require a whole-of-society approach and imply structural transformations in several, if not most, sectors of the economy. The post-COVID-19 recovery effort offers an unprecedented and likely unique window during which to mobilize and channel the investments necessary to achieve such a vision and recover better.

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<sup>7</sup> Marshall Burke, W. Matthew Davis and Noah S. Diffenbaugh, “Large potential reduction in economic damages under United Nations mitigation targets”, *Nature*, vol. 557, No. 7706 (May 2018).

<sup>8</sup> International Renewable Energy Agency, *Global Renewables Outlook 2020: Energy transformation 2050*.

### **III. Mobilizing the support of the United Nations system for the decade of action**

36. Before the COVID-19 crisis, consultations with Member States and United Nations entities had been undertaken on how the United Nations could best support the accelerated implementation of the Goals during the decade of action. The consultations highlighted the importance of strengthening mobilization, ambition and solutions, as well as amplifying the support of the United Nations system for three key challenges: (a) eradicating poverty and reducing inequality; (b) driving climate action and supporting a healthy planet; and (c) achieving gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls. The effective execution of the strategy and road map of the Secretary-General for financing the 2030 Agenda, as well as the ongoing reforms of the United Nations development system, will permeate the Organization's response.

37. The present report provides a catalogue of the challenges and opportunities relating to addressing poverty and driving climate action, but 2020 is also a crucial year for gender equality, as the world marks the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. Together, those instruments define the most comprehensive and transformative global agenda for gender equality and the empowerment of women. The vision of Beijing has been realized only partly. Women in parliaments are still outnumbered 3 to 1 by men, women still earn just 77 cents for every dollar earned by men and unpaid care and domestic work remain stubbornly feminized the world over. In some areas, progress towards gender equality has been stalled or even reversed. Some countries have rolled back laws that protect women from violence, others are reducing civic space and still others are pursuing economic and immigration policies that discriminate indirectly against women. Women's access to sexual and reproductive health services is far from universal.

38. With nations throughout the world searching for solutions to the complex challenges of this age, one way to get on track to achieve the Goals is to accelerate the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action. In the past 25 years, growing, strengthened, vibrant, transnational and diverse women's movements have challenged slow and piecemeal progress increasingly by calling for urgent systemic change. They have advanced gender equality and demanded accountability from governments and other powerful actors and will be at the very centre of efforts to achieve tangible results with regard to gender equality during the decade of action.

39. The United Nations is currently doing everything possible to support countries in responding to the health and other socioeconomic implications of the pandemic. To help to ensure that the United Nations system is well prepared to support countries in addressing the impact of the pandemic, a COVID-19 preparedness and response plan, a global humanitarian appeal and a United Nations response and recovery fund have been launched. The United Nations Sustainable Development Group has also developed a system-wide framework to guide the work of the 131 United Nations country teams for the immediate socioeconomic response to the pandemic.

40. Going forward, all assets of the United Nations system will be activated to advance the decade of action. At the country level, the United Nations resident coordinators are now better positioned to expand the provision of integrated policy and programmatic support to national Governments for the implementation of the Goals and climate action. Governments can also call upon the United Nations system regarding the design of transformative pathways and resource mobilization strategies to accelerate the implementation of the Goals at the country level. That includes support for countries regarding the design of enhanced, high-quality nationally determined contributions and long-term decarbonization and adaptation strategies. The United Nations system, furthermore, will work closely with governments in the

generation of high-quality statistics related to the Goals, in outreach and advocacy efforts and by mobilizing the engagement of local authorities and the private sector actively in the process of implementing the Goals.

41. At the regional level, my proposals to strengthen the regional architecture of the United Nations system are aimed at helping to make the United Nations system more effective and responsive in supporting the implementation of the Goals and climate action. At the global level, the United Nations system can provide wide-ranging support to Member States to accelerate the implementation of the Goals in areas such as engagement with intergovernmental bodies, data, analysis, standards and rule-setting, thought leadership, public engagement, outreach and advocacy and partnership-building. The United Nations system can work with Member States and other actors in raising the level of ambition and the impact of the outcomes of major upcoming intergovernmental processes in important areas, such as oceans, sustainable transport, sustainable energy, gender equity, climate change and biodiversity. The United Nations system through higher-quality technical support can enhance the ability of key intergovernmental bodies such as the high-level political forum on sustainable development to monitor and accelerate the implementation of the Goals.

## IV. Conclusions

42. The annual Sustainable Development Goals Moment, to be organized by the Secretary-General in the context of the General Debate of the General Assembly and build on the high-level political forum, offers an opportunity to generate momentum among all stakeholders for a recovery that moves us closer to inclusive, resilient and sustainable societies and to provide a launch pad for the decade of action to deliver the Goals.

43. At the Sustainable Development Goals Summit, it was reaffirmed that the Goals can be achieved by 2030 if the speed and level of ambition are stepped up during the decade of action. It will require Member States to renew the spirit of cooperation and multilateralism that characterized the adoption of the 2030 Agenda and the Paris Agreement on Climate Change. Countries also need to actively leverage the capacity, commitment and energy of young people and civil society, businesses and the scientific community when accelerating the process of implementing the Goals.

44. The outbreak underscores how interconnected the world has become and why cooperation among States is now more important than ever. An effective response to the pandemic requires countries to intensify cross-border cooperation in areas such as procurement of health equipment, vaccines, treatments and exchange of lessons learned along with commitment to coordinating economic policymaking. The outbreak should not be an excuse to weaken multilateralism, but, rather, should serve as a reminder that international cooperation is in need of further strengthening.

45. The following recommendations are made in the present report as Member States embark on a decisive decade of action:

(a) The outbreak has reaffirmed the need to strengthen multilateral cooperation and governance to address global emergencies in areas such as health and climate change. The fast-spreading character of COVID-19 and similar pandemics requires strong functional capacity at the global level to coordinate the actions of States effectively and efficiently. In that context, it is important to reflect on the changes required for the United Nations to play such a coordinating role. The pandemic also highlights the need for stronger and more resilient public health and emergency response systems, in particular in developing countries;

(b) The spirit of solidarity and cooperation that has characterized the international response to the pandemic needs to be extended to the implementation of the Goals and to the climate emergency, in particular at the country level, where Governments can promote a whole-of-society approach by mobilizing all stakeholders in the identification of high-impact transformative pathways that capitalize on synergies across multiple sectors simultaneously;

(c) Reducing income inequality in society must become a key strategy to eradicate extreme poverty by 2030. Unless societies decide to address the challenge of inequality head-on, the pledge to leave no one behind will remain an aspiration only;

(d) Member States need to commit themselves to rapid and sustained reductions in carbon dioxide emissions during the decade of action in order to achieve net zero emissions by 2050 and limit global warming to 1.5°C, which will require a 45 per cent reduction in global carbon dioxide emissions by 2030. In parallel, Member States need to design and implement adaptation strategies to cope with the unavoidable impacts of climate change and protect their communities;

(e) The United Nations system has a critical role to play in enabling countries to achieve the Goals by 2030. That task will require the strong commitment of all United Nations entities to common approaches to the planning, programming and implementation of the Goals, as well as an effective partnership between the United Nations system and Member States at all levels.

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