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Social Council**

## Progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals

### Report of the Secretary-General

#### *Summary*

In accordance with General Assembly resolution [70/1](#), the present report provides a global overview of the current situation of the Sustainable Development Goals on the basis of the latest available data on indicators in the global indicator framework.



## Introduction

1. The year 2020 was an extraordinary time in human history. To date, the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic has cost over 3 million lives, devastated the global economy and upended all spheres of human life. Against this backdrop, the present report was prepared to provide an overview of progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals using inputs from more than 50 international and regional organizations. The data contained herein are derived from indicators in the global indicator framework developed by the Inter-Agency and Expert Group on Sustainable Development Goal Indicators and adopted by the General Assembly on 6 July 2017 (see resolution [71/313](#)).<sup>1</sup>

2. Before the COVID-19 pandemic, progress was being made on implementing the Goals in important areas such as reducing poverty, improving maternal and child health, increasing access to electricity and advancing gender equality. In many instances, however, those advances were not happening fast enough. Moreover, in truly transformative areas such as reducing inequality, lowering carbon emissions and tackling hunger, progress had either stalled or reversed. As a result, by early 2020, the world was not on track to meet the Goals and targets by 2030.

3. With the pandemic still raging in many parts of the world, the extent to which the achievement of the Goals has been further derailed is not yet fully known. However, it is clear from the present report that the pandemic has already had a very significant impact in a number of areas, undermining decades of development efforts.

4. The impact is particularly evident in relation to Goal 1. The pandemic-related economic downturn has pushed between 119 and 124 million more people into extreme poverty in 2020, further compounding challenges to poverty eradication such as conflict, climate change and natural disasters. The crisis is also exacerbating inequalities: in 2020, the equivalent of 255 million full-time jobs were lost, and an additional 101 million children and young people fell below the minimum reading proficiency level, wiping out the education gains achieved over the previous two decades. It is also estimated that up to 10 million additional girls will be at risk of child marriage in the next decade as a result of the pandemic.

5. The economic slowdown associated with the pandemic has done little to slow the climate crisis. Preliminary data for 2020 indicate that atmospheric concentrations of the major global greenhouse gases increased, while the global average temperature was about 1.2°C above pre-industrial levels, dangerously close to the 1.5°C limit established in the Paris Agreement. Furthermore, the world fell short on 2020 targets aimed at halting biodiversity loss, with 10 million ha of forest lost each year in the period 2015–2020.

6. As shown in the present report, some of the means of implementation required to support sustainable transformation have been affected by the COVID-19 crisis. Global flows of foreign direct investment (FDI) declined by 40 per cent compared to 2019. The value of global merchandise trade is predicted to have fallen by 5.6 per cent in 2020 compared to 2019. The many fiscal impacts of the pandemic are leading to debt distress in many countries and territories. While net official development assistance (ODA) increased in 2020 to a total of \$161 billion, that figure still falls well short of the amount needed to respond to the pandemic and meet the long-established target of 0.7 per cent of gross national income.

7. In the present report, the Secretary-General paints a worrying picture of the state of the Goals six years after the adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable

<sup>1</sup> The indicator framework, a statistical annex to the report and the Global Sustainable Development Goals Indicators Database are available at <https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/>.

Development. However, the collective response over the coming 18 months will determine whether or not the COVID-19 crisis serves as a much-needed wake-up call to spur a decade of truly transformative action that delivers for people and planet.

8. Over the past year, there have been rays of hope. There has been immense community resilience, decisive action from governments, a rapid expansion of social protection, the acceleration of digital transformation, and a unique collaboration to develop life-saving vaccines and treatments in record time. In addition, as documented in the present report, there are solid foundations on which to build in some areas.

9. A concerted effort is now needed to ensure equitable access to COVID-19 vaccines and treatments, strengthen the financial position of developing countries and embrace a recovery guided by the 2030 Agenda. To get back on track with the Goals, governments, cities, business and industries must take advantage of the recovery to adopt low-carbon, resilient and inclusive development pathways that will reduce carbon emissions, conserve natural resources, create better jobs, advance gender equality and tackle growing inequities.

10. The ability of governments to respond effectively and achieve a better recovery will also depend on the availability of data. Over the past year, the data and statistical community has faced unprecedented disruptions in statistical operations and a spike in demand for data to use in monitoring and mitigating the effects of the global pandemic. Many national statistical offices have adapted quickly to the challenges and played a major role in the COVID-19 responses of Governments. New partnerships, data innovations and novel measures have been introduced that have profoundly changed the statistical production process in many countries. However, the pandemic has exacerbated critical funding gaps in national, regional and global statistical offices, increasing the urgency of the need to mobilize international and domestic resources in support of data for decision-making.

11. The same is true of the availability of internationally comparable data on the Goals. Considerable progress has been made in this area, with the number of indicators included in the Global Sustainable Development Goal Indicators Database increasing from 115 in 2016 to 166 in 2019 and 211 in 2021. However, significant data gaps still exist in terms of geographical coverage, timeliness and disaggregation level, making it difficult to fully comprehend the pace of progress, and differences across regions and know who is being left behind. With the high-level political forum on sustainable development and the United Nations World Data Forum to be held in 2021, it is essential that greater resources and innovation be deployed to further enhance data for achieving the Goals.

## **Goal 1. End poverty in all its forms everywhere**

12. The slowdown in progress on poverty reduction since 2015 has been further set back by the COVID-19 pandemic, with the global rate of extreme poverty rising in 2020 for the first time in over 20 years. The triple threat of COVID-19, conflict and climate change makes the global goal of ending poverty by 2030 unachievable unless immediate and substantial policy actions are taken. The COVID-19 crisis has demonstrated the importance of social protection systems for protecting health, employment and income, with many new social protection measures introduced in 2020 as a result. However, 4 billion people worldwide are still without any social protection, most of whom are poor and vulnerable.

13. Compounding the threats to poverty eradication posed by climate change and conflict, the pandemic is set to increase the number of poor people in 2020 by between 119 and 124 million, causing the extreme poverty rate to rise for the first time in a

generation, from 8.4 per cent in 2019 to 9.5 per cent in 2020 according to “nowcasts”. Of the “new poor”, 8 out of 10 are in middle-income countries and territories. It is predicted that around 600 million people will still be living in extreme poverty by 2030.

14. Before the pandemic, global extreme poverty had fallen from 10.1 per cent in 2015 to 9.3 per cent in 2017, equivalent to 689 million people living on less than \$1.90 a day. However, the rate of decrease had slowed to less than half a percentage point annually in that period, compared to around 1 percentage point annually between 1990 and 2015.

15. The share of workers around the world living in extreme poverty fell from 14 per cent in 2010 to 7.8 per cent in 2015 and 6.6 per cent in 2019, although progress for young workers was less encouraging. However, the pandemic has severely affected the informal economy, in which the vast majority of the working poor are employed. The crisis also has had a disproportionate impact on the livelihoods of young and female workers, who are already much more likely to be living in poverty. In 2019, young people were twice as likely as adults to be among the working poor.

16. By 2020, only 47 per cent of the global population was covered effectively by at least one social protection cash benefit, leaving 4 billion people unprotected. However, between 1 February and 31 December 2020, governments of 209 countries and territories announced more than 1,600 mostly short-term social protection measures in response to the COVID-19 crisis.

17. In 2019, 12,000 disaster fatalities were reported across 72 reporting countries and territories. This is a significant reduction on the figure for 2018, when disaster mortality reported by 105 countries and territories reached a total of 125,000, and is in line with the overall trend in mortality that has been declining since 2005. On the basis of the latest reports submitted as part of the monitoring process under the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015–2030, direct economic losses of \$9.3 billion were reported for 2019 by 67 countries and territories, of which 68 per cent or \$6.4 billion was recorded for the agricultural sector.

18. Only 30 per cent of all countries and territories with data for the period 2015–2018 spent between 15 and 20 per cent of total government expenditure on education, as recommended in the Framework for Action for the implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 4.

19. Total ODA grants for basic social services and development food aid, which are intended for poverty reduction, represented 0.02 per cent of the gross national income of donors to the Development Assistance Committee in 2019.

## **Goal 2. End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture**

20. Even before the COVID-19 pandemic, the number of people experiencing hunger globally and suffering from food insecurity had been rising gradually since 2014. The pandemic has increased the vulnerabilities and inadequacies of global food systems, potentially leaving hundreds of millions more people chronically undernourished and making the goal of ending hunger more difficult to achieve. Between 83 and 132 million more people may already have been pushed into chronic hunger in 2020. In addition, countries and territories around the world continue to struggle with multiple forms of malnutrition.

21. It is estimated that almost 690 million people around the world experienced hunger in 2019, equivalent to 8.9 per cent of the world population – an increase of

nearly 60 million in five years. Updated estimates due for publication in July 2021 will provide a more recent picture of the effects of the pandemic on hunger.

22. An estimated 2 billion people, 25.9 per cent of the world population, were affected by moderate or severe food insecurity in 2019, up from 22.4 per cent in 2015. The fastest rise was recorded in Latin America and the Caribbean, although the highest levels were registered in sub-Saharan Africa.

23. Globally, 149.2 million children under the age of 5, some 22 per cent of all children, suffer from stunting (low height for age) according to the latest estimates available for 2020,<sup>2</sup> a decrease from 24.4 per cent in 2015. However, these figures may rise as a result of continued constraints on access to nutritious food and essential nutrition services during the pandemic, the full impact of which may take years to manifest.

24. In 2020,<sup>2</sup> wasting (low weight for height) and overweight affected 6.7 per cent (45.4 million) and 5.7 per cent (38.9 million) of children under the age of 5, respectively. Wasting will be one of the conditions most affected by the pandemic in the short term: around 15 per cent more children than estimated may have suffered from wasting as a result of a decline in household wealth and disruptions in the availability and affordability of nutritious food and essential nutrition services. Childhood overweight (high weight for height) may also rise in some countries and territories where unhealthy foods replaced fresh, nutritious foodstuffs and restrictions on movement constrained opportunities for physical activity for long periods.

25. In women, anaemia increases the risk of adverse maternal and neonatal outcomes. In 2019, the global prevalence of anaemia was 29.9 per cent in women of reproductive age, 29.6 per cent in non-pregnant women and 36.5 per cent in pregnant women. The prevalence was higher in Central and Southern Asia, at 47.5 per cent in women of reproductive age.

26. The average agricultural output per labour day of small-scale food producers in the limited number of countries and territories surveyed is lower than that of large-scale producers, who also earn up to two or three times the annual income of small-scale producers. In almost all countries and territories surveyed, households headed by males achieve higher labour productivity and earn larger annual incomes compared to their female counterparts.

27. Global holdings of plant genetic resources for food and agriculture in 2020 reached 5.7 million accessions conserved in 831 gene banks by 114 countries and territories and 17 regional and international research centres. Although the total number of global holdings has risen, the growth rate decreased over the past 10 years, reaching its lowest level in 2020.

28. The world is still far off target for maintaining the genetic diversity of farmed and domesticated animals, either in the field or in gene banks. The risk status of 61 per cent of local livestock breeds remains unknown. Of the limited number surveyed, 74 per cent are deemed to be at risk of extinction, yet there is only sufficient material in gene banks for 203 out of a global total of 7,700 local livestock breeds to reconstitute the breed in the event of its extinction.

29. While the share of agricultural aid has remained constant at about 5 per cent, it has more than doubled in volume since 2002, with total disbursements amounting to \$13 billion in 2019.

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<sup>2</sup> The estimates for 2020 do not reflect the full impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, as household survey data on child height and age were not collected that year owing to physical distancing policies.

30. A steady downward trend has been observed in export subsidy outlays notified to the World Trade Organization (WTO). Total notified annual outlays fell from a peak of \$6.7 billion in 1999 to \$138 million in 2018. In December 2015, WTO members adopted the ministerial decision on export competition, formally agreeing to eliminate all forms of agricultural export subsidy entitlements.

31. At the global level, the number of countries and territories afflicted by high food prices decreased from 2014 to 2019, with the notable exception of some countries in Central, Southern and Western Asia as well as Northern Africa, owing to the reduced domestic availability of staple foods and to currency depreciations.

### **Goal 3. Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages**

32. Before the COVID-19 pandemic, progress had been made in many health areas, including improving the health of mothers and children, increasing immunization coverage and reducing the incidence of communicable diseases, albeit not fast enough to meet the Goal 3 targets by 2030. The disruption caused by the pandemic has now halted progress and even reversed some gains made. According to a recent survey, substantial disruptions persist more than a year into the pandemic, with about 90 per cent of countries and territories still reporting one or more disruptions to essential health services. Among the health services most extensively affected are those for mental, neurological and substance use disorders; neglected tropical diseases; tuberculosis; HIV and hepatitis B and C; cancer screening; services for other non-communicable diseases, including hypertension and diabetes; family planning and contraception; urgent dental care; malnutrition; immunization; and malaria.

#### **Reproductive, maternal and child health**

33. According to data from the period 2014–2020, 83 per cent of births worldwide were assisted by skilled health professionals, including medical doctors, nurses and midwives, an increase from 71 per cent in the period from 2007 to 2013. The COVID-19 pandemic may reverse gains in skilled childbirth care coverage and disrupt maternity health services.

34. The world has made substantial progress towards the goal of ending preventable child deaths, with the global under-5 mortality rate decreasing from 76 to 38 deaths per 1,000 live births between 2000 and 2019. The global neonatal mortality rate fell from 30 deaths to 17 per 1,000 live births in the same period. Even with such progress, 5.2 million children died in 2019 before reaching their fifth birthday, with almost half of those deaths, 2.4 million, occurring in the first month of life. While the full impact of the pandemic on child survival is not yet known, significant disruption to the continued provision of life-saving interventions could stall or even reverse the progress made.

35. The proportion of women of reproductive age (15 to 49 years) who have their family planning needs met by modern contraceptive methods has remained steady at around 77 per cent between 2015 and 2021, reaching only 56 per cent in sub-Saharan Africa and 52 per cent in Oceania, excluding Australia and New Zealand. The ongoing pandemic may lead to reductions in these figures as a result of supply-chain disruptions and decreased access to family planning services, while the fertility intentions and family planning needs among women of reproductive age may also change.

36. The global adolescent birth rate has fallen from 56 births per 1,000 adolescent women 15 to 19 years of age in 2000 to 45 births per 1,000 adolescents in 2015 and

41 per 1,000 in 2020. The declines varied considerably across regions, with the largest decrease in Central and Southern Asia from 70 births per 1,000 adolescents in 2000 to 24 births per 1,000 in 2020.

### **Infectious diseases**

37. While the rate of new HIV infections declined from 0.48 infections per 1,000 uninfected population among adults (15 to 49 years of age) to 0.37 per 1,000 between 2010 and 2019, it remained far higher than the global target for 2020. The largest decrease was in sub-Saharan Africa, the region with the highest numbers of people living with HIV. Major inequalities remain in access to HIV prevention, testing and treatment services across regions, countries, and sub-populations within countries. There is evidence to suggest that the COVID-19 pandemic has caused considerable disruption to HIV services, including testing, initiation of treatment, voluntary medical male circumcision and pre-exposure prophylaxis.

38. In 2019, an estimated 10 million people fell ill with tuberculosis, of whom 56 per cent were adult men, 32 per cent adult women, 12 per cent children and 8.2 per cent people living with HIV, making it the leading cause of death from a single infectious agent. Globally, the incidence of tuberculosis fell from 174 new and relapse cases per 100,000 population in 2000 to 130 cases per 100,000 in 2019, a 25 per cent decline over the period, with the tuberculosis mortality rate among HIV-negative people falling by 45 per cent in the same period. Although the disease burden is decreasing, large gaps in detection and treatment persist, and the current pace of progress is not fast enough to meet the target of ending tuberculosis by 2030. Drug-resistant tuberculosis is a continuing threat: in 2019, there were 465,000 new cases with resistance to rifampicin, the most effective first-line drug, and 78 per cent of those infected with tuberculosis had a multidrug-resistant strain. As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, an estimated 1.4 million fewer people received necessary care for tuberculosis during 2020 compared with the previous year, a reduction in treatment levels of 21 per cent.

39. Between 2015 and 2019, the incidence of malaria plateaued at around 57 cases per 1,000 people at risk. The target of the World Health Organization for reductions in malaria case incidence in 2020 will be missed by 37 per cent. In 2019, there were a total of 229 million malaria cases worldwide, with the disease claiming some 409,000 lives. Gaps in funding and in access to life-saving tools are undermining global efforts to curb the disease, and the COVID-19 pandemic is expected to set the fight back even further.

40. The use of the hepatitis B vaccine in infants has reduced the incidence of new chronic hepatitis B infections considerably. The proportion of children under 5 years of age who became chronically infected fell from 4.7 per cent in the pre-vaccination era to 0.9 per cent in 2020. Worldwide, the 2020 target of 1 per cent seroprevalence in children under 5 years of age has been met. Additional efforts for increasing coverage are needed to achieve the Goal target of 0.1 per cent seroprevalence by 2030.

41. In 2019, 1.74 billion people were reported to have required mass or individual treatment and care for neglected tropical diseases, down from 2.19 billion in 2010 and 12 million fewer than the figure reported for 2018. The lower number of people requiring interventions is largely the result of having eliminated at least one neglected tropical disease in 42 countries and territories since 2010.

### **Non-communicable diseases, mental health and environmental risks**

42. Globally, 74 per cent of all deaths in 2019 were caused by non-communicable diseases. The probability of dying from any of the four main non-communicable

diseases (cardiovascular disease, cancer, diabetes or chronic respiratory disease) between 30 and 70 years of age decreased from 19.9 per cent in 2010 to 17.8 per cent in 2019. The rate of decline is insufficient to meet the Goal target. The COVID-19 pandemic has underscored the need for further attention to interventions in non-communicable diseases, as people with underlying non-communicable diseases are at higher risk of severe illness and death from the COVID-19 virus.

43. About 700,000 suicide deaths occurred in 2019. The global suicide death rate declined by 29 per cent, from 13 deaths per 100,000 population in 2000 to 9.2 deaths per 100,000 in 2019.

44. In 2019, global alcohol consumption was 5.8 litres of pure alcohol per person 15 years of age or older, a 5 per cent decrease from 6.1 litres in 2010.

45. The global rate of mortality from road traffic injuries fell by 8.3 per cent, from 18.1 deaths per 100,000 population in 2010 to 16.7 deaths per 100,000 in 2019. Nevertheless, 1.3 million people worldwide died in road traffic accidents in 2019, 75 per cent of whom were boys and men. Low-income countries and territories had lower rates of vehicle ownership than in high-income countries and territories, yet a death rate more than 3.5 times higher. Road traffic injuries were the leading cause of death among young people 15 to 29 years of age worldwide.

46. The global prevalence of tobacco uses among men declined from 50 per cent in 2000 to 38.6 per cent in 2018, and among women from 16.7 per cent in 2000 to 8.5 per cent in 2018. Even so, the number of people dying from a tobacco-related illness was estimated to be more than 8.1 million in 2017.

47. Unintentional poisonings were responsible for more than 84,000 deaths in 2019. Although the number of such deaths has steadily declined since 2000, mortality rates continue to be relatively high in low-income countries and territories, where they are more than twice the global average. One third of all deaths from unintentional poisonings occurred in sub-Saharan Africa.

### **Health systems and funding**

48. Immunization is one of the world's most successful and cost-effective health interventions. While vaccination coverage among infants increased from 72 per cent in 2000 to 85 per cent in 2015 before stalling until 2019, an estimated 19.7 million children did not receive essential vaccines during the first year of their life in 2019. In addition, global coverage levels for the pneumococcal conjugate vaccine, which has the potential to significantly reduce the incidence of pneumonia, have yet to reach 50 per cent. Measles is a highly contagious disease, and the 71 per cent coverage of the two-dose vaccine in 2019 was insufficient to prevent outbreaks of measles.

49. Improvements in essential health services, as measured by the universal health coverage service coverage index, increased from a global average of 45 out of 100 in the year 2000 to 66 in 2017. Low-income countries and territories experienced the greatest progress, driven mainly by interventions for infectious diseases. However, the pace of progress has slowed since 2010, and the poorest countries and territories and those affected by conflict are generally lagging furthest behind. The COVID-19 pandemic is derailing progress even further.

50. Before the pandemic, an estimated 927 million people, or 12.7 per cent of the global population, made out-of-pocket health-care payments amounting to more than 10 per cent of their household budgets, and for 209 million people, or 3 per cent, their share of health-care spending exceeded 25 per cent of their household budgets, posing an even greater threat to spending on other essential goods and services such as food and education.



51. ODA for basic health from all official donors has increased by 59 per cent in real terms since 2010, reaching \$11 billion in 2019. The Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria, the Gavi Alliance and the United States of America accounted for more than half of that total, providing \$2.4 billion, \$1.9 billion and \$1.8 billion, respectively. In 2019, \$3.4 billion was spent on basic health care, \$2.2 billion on infectious disease control, excluding HIV/AIDS, and \$2.2 billion on malaria control.

52. Health workers are on the front line of the COVID-19 pandemic response. Countries and territories, especially those with a limited health workforce, are further constrained with regard to the delivery of essential health services. On the basis of data from the period 2013–2018, the density of nursing and midwifery personnel in Northern America is more than 150 per 10,000 population, which is more than 15 times that in sub-Saharan Africa and 8 times that in Northern Africa and Southern Asia. The density of medical doctors in Northern America, Oceania and Central Asia remains around 25 per 10,000 population, compared to 2 per 10,000 population in sub-Saharan Africa.

#### **Goal 4. Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all**

53. The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on schooling is a “generational catastrophe”.<sup>3</sup> Before the pandemic, progress was already slow and insufficient to achieve the education targets in the Goals. School closures caused by the pandemic have had devastating consequences for children’s learning and well-being. Hundreds of millions of children and young people are falling behind in their learning, which will have long-term impacts. One year into the COVID-19 crisis, two thirds of students worldwide are still affected by full or partial school closures. The most vulnerable children and those unable to access remote learning are at increased risk of never returning to school and of being forced into child marriage or child labour.

54. It is estimated that 101 million additional children and young people (from grades 1 to 8) fell below the minimum reading proficiency level in 2020 owing to the consequences of the pandemic, which wiped out the education gains achieved over the past 20 years. Reading proficiency levels could recover by 2024, but only if exceptional efforts are devoted to the task through remedial and catch-up strategies.

55. Just before the pandemic, 53 per cent of young people were completing secondary school globally, although the figure for sub-Saharan Africa was only 29 per cent. The rise in school completion rates may slow or even reverse depending on the duration of school closures, which are resulting in learning losses and affecting the motivation to attend school, and on the extent to which poverty might increase, adding to the obstacles faced by disadvantaged children.

56. Data from before the pandemic for 76 mostly low- and middle-income countries and territories covering the period 2012–2020 indicate that 7 in 10 children who are 3 and 4 years of age are on track developmentally, with no significant differences between the sexes. However, many young children are unable to attend early education because of the pandemic and so are now entirely reliant on their caregivers for nurturing care. Unsafe conditions, negative interactions with caregivers and a lack of educational opportunities during the early years can lead to irreversible outcomes, affecting children’s potential for the remainder of their lives.

<sup>3</sup> United Nations, “Education during COVID-19 and beyond”, policy brief, August 2020.

57. The rate of participation in organized learning one year before the official age of entry into primary education rose steadily in the years before the pandemic, from 65 per cent in 2010 to 73 per cent in 2019, but with variation among countries and territories ranging from 12 per cent to nearly 100 per cent. Gender parity has been achieved in every region. The progress made over past years has been at risk since 2020 because early education facilities and primary schools closed in most countries and territories, preventing or limiting access to education, especially for children from low- and middle-income countries and territories.

58. Disparities in access to education and learning outcomes persist across a range of education indicators. For example, there were still only 92 literate women and girls 15 years of age or older for every 100 literate boys and men of the same age range in 2019. Almost half of countries and territories with recent data did not achieve gender parity in primary completion, and only a handful of countries and territories demonstrate parity in tertiary enrolment ratios. Disparities by urban/rural geographical location and household wealth are typically more extreme, with one third and one sixth of countries and territories achieving parity in primary completion, respectively, and no countries or territories with recent data achieving parity in tertiary attendance. The pandemic is expected to lead to a reversal in recent progress towards equity. With the shift towards remote learning, those from the poorest households and other vulnerable groups are less equipped to participate and more likely to drop out permanently or for extended periods.

59. According to data for the period from 2017 to 2019, more than one fifth of primary schools worldwide do not have access to basic drinking water, and more than one third lack basic handwashing facilities. In the least developed countries, more than two thirds of primary schools do not have access to electricity, with even lower rates of Internet access and computer availability for pedagogical purposes in schools.

60. ODA for scholarships amounted to \$1.7 billion in 2019, up from \$1.3 billion in 2017. The European Union, France, Japan, Saudi Arabia and Turkey accounted for 55 per cent of this total.

61. In 2019, 81 per cent of primary school teachers were trained, although that proportion was lower in sub-Saharan Africa (65 per cent) and Southern Asia (74 per cent). With the unprecedented lockdown as a result of the pandemic leading to total or partial school closures in most countries and territories, the teaching workforce was severely affected.

## **Goal 5. Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls**

62. The socioeconomic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic have adversely affected recent progress on gender equality: violence against women and girls has intensified, child marriage is expected to increase after declining in previous years, and increased care work at home is affecting women disproportionately. The pandemic has highlighted the need for swift action to address the gender inequality that remains pervasive globally and to get back on track for achieving gender equality. Women have played a critical role in the response to the pandemic as front-line health workers, caregivers, and managers and leaders of the response and recovery efforts. However, they remain underrepresented in critical leadership positions, and their rights and priorities are often not explicitly addressed in those efforts. The crisis presents an opportunity to reshape and rebuild systems, laws, policies and institutions in order to advance gender equality.

63. Discriminatory laws and legal gaps continue to prevent women from fully enjoying their human rights. According to data for 2020 from 95 countries and

territories, more than half lacked quotas for women in the national parliament; 83 per cent included budgetary commitments to implement legislation addressing violence against women, although 63 per cent continued to lack rape laws based on the principle of consent; more than 90 per cent prohibited discrimination in employment on the basis of gender, yet almost half continued to restrict women from working in certain jobs or industries; and almost one quarter did not grant women equal rights to men for entering into marriage and initiating divorce proceedings.

64. New estimates based on surveys from the period 2000–2018 confirm that nearly 736 million women, or one in three, have been subjected to physical violence, sexual violence or both by a husband or intimate partner, or sexual violence by a non-partner, at least once in their lifetime from 15 years of age – a figure that has remained largely unchanged over the past decade. Intimate partner violence starts early, with nearly 24 per cent of adolescent girls 15 to 19 years of age and 26 per cent of young women 20 to 24 years of age who have ever had a partner or been married having experienced such violence already.

65. 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 by 15 per cent, from nearly one in four in 2010 to one in five in 2020. As a result of this progress, the child marriages of some 25 million girls have been averted. However, the profound effects of the pandemic are threatening this progress, with up to 10 million additional girls at risk of child marriage in the next decade as a result of the pandemic.

66. According to data from 31 countries and territories in which the practice is concentrated, at least 200 million women and girls have been subjected to female genital mutilation. Despite some progress, there are still countries and territories in which at least 9 in 10 girls and women ranging from 15 to 49 years of age have been subjected to such mutilation, making the harmful practice almost universal.

67. The latest data collected on 90 countries and territories between 2001 and 2019 indicate that, on an average day, women spend about 2.5 times as many hours as men on unpaid domestic work and care work.

68. As at 1 January 2021, data from 135 countries and territories indicated that the global average proportion of women in the single or lower houses of parliaments had reached 25.6 per cent, continuing a slow upward trend that would require 40 years for gender parity to be achieved, while the proportion of women in local deliberative bodies was 36.3 per cent. There are 40 per cent or more women in the lower or single parliamentary houses of only 23 countries and territories and in the local governments of only 22 countries and territories, proportions achieved through the use of gender quotas in most of the countries and territories.

69. By 2019, women accounted for nearly 39 per cent of the global labour force, but held only 28.3 per cent of managerial positions, a rise of 3 percentage points since 2000. The disproportionate impact of the pandemic on women in the workforce, and female entrepreneurs in particular, threatens to roll back the little progress made in reducing the global gender gap in managerial positions.

70. Data for 2020 from 36 countries and territories on national legal framework guarantees for women's equal rights to land ownership show that substantial improvement has been achieved in establishing equal inheritance rights (69 per cent) and establishing spousal consent requirements for land transactions (61 per cent), while progress is lagging in areas including land registration, customary law, and women's representation in land governance.

71. Empowering more women with mobile telephones has been shown to accelerate social and economic development. However, in the 66 countries and territories with data for the period 2017–2019, average mobile telephone ownership was 8.5 percentage points lower for women than for men.

72. In 2018, 81 per cent of the 69 countries and territories for which there are data needed to improve their systems for tracking budget allocations for gender equality. In the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, strengthening these systems through the comprehensive use of gender-budgeting tools will contribute to the better targeting of resources for a gender-responsive recovery.

## **Goal 6. Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all**

73. Billions of people worldwide still live without safely managed drinking-water, sanitation and hygiene services, which are critical for protecting human health and containing the spread of the COVID-19 virus. Over the past century, global water use has increased at more than twice the rate of population growth. In addition to water stress, countries and territories are facing growing challenges linked to water pollution, degraded water-related ecosystems, water scarcity caused by climate change, and a lack of cooperation on transboundary waters. The world is not on track to achieve Goal 6. A dramatic acceleration is needed in the current rates of progress and in integrated and holistic approaches to water management.

74. Between 2000 and 2020, the global population using safely managed drinking-water and sanitation services increased by 2 billion and 2.4 billion, respectively. Despite the progress, 2 billion people lacked safely managed drinking-water services, 3.6 billion safely managed sanitation services and 2.3 billion basic hygiene services in 2020. One in three people worldwide still lack basic handwashing facilities with soap and water at home, leaving them especially vulnerable to the COVID-19 virus.

75. Among the 42 countries and territories reporting on total wastewater generation and treatment in 2015, 32 per cent of wastewater flows were subject to some form of treatment. An estimated 56 per cent of wastewater generated by households in 2020 was safely treated, according to data from 128 countries and territories.

76. An assessment of rivers, lakes and aquifers of 89 countries and territories in 2020 indicates that the water quality of 72 per cent of the water bodies assessed is good. Protection is easier than restoration, so efforts to protect these water bodies from pollution must be initiated now.

77. Improving water use efficiency is a key measure that can contribute to reducing water stress in a country. Global efficiency increased from \$17.30 per m<sup>3</sup> in 2015 to \$19 per m<sup>3</sup> in 2018, a 10 per cent increase. All economic sectors have experienced an increase in water use efficiency since 2015, with increases of 15 per cent in the industrial sector, 8 per cent in the agricultural sector and 8 per cent in the services sector.

78. In 2018, global water stress was estimated to be 18.4 per cent, an increase from 18.2 per cent in 2015. Regions such as Western and Southern Asia and Northern Africa present very high levels of water stress at more than 70 per cent, while South-Eastern Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean, and sub-Saharan Africa saw their water stress levels increase from 2017 to 2018.

79. In 2020, 129 countries and territories were not on track to meet the target for implementing integrated water resources management by 2030, which includes financing and intersectoral coordination mechanisms, basin management and

monitoring. The rate of implementation needs to double globally. In many countries and territories, the COVID-19 pandemic has led to wider stakeholder engagement in water resources management through online consultations.

80. Advancing transboundary water cooperation plays a crucial role in preventing conflicts and supporting wider regional integration, peace and sustainable development. However, according to data from 2017 and 2020, only 24 of the 153 countries and territories that share transboundary rivers, lakes and aquifers have 100 per cent of their transboundary basin area covered by operational arrangements, and only another 22 countries and territories have more than 70 per cent covered.

81. Freshwater ecosystems and the multitude of resources that they provide are changing dramatically. One fifth of the world's river basins are experiencing rapid increases or decreases in surface water area. This unprecedented situation is compounded by pollution in large lakes and the persistent loss and degradation of wetlands and freshwater biodiversity. Between 1970 and 2015, the total area of inland and marine or coastal wetlands declined by approximately 35 per cent, three times the rate of forest loss. Existing efforts to protect and restore water-related ecosystems must be scaled up and accelerated urgently.

82. From 2015 to 2019, ODA disbursements to the water sector remained stable at around \$8.8 billion, while ODA commitments to the water sector rose by 9 per cent. In the same period, concessional lending for the least developed countries increased by 52 per cent to \$2 billion, with ODA grants to those countries increasing by only 8 per cent.

83. In 2018 and 2019, two thirds of the 109 reporting countries and territories had procedures for the participation of local communities in water and sanitation management that were defined in laws or policies. However, only 14 countries and territories reported high levels of community and user participation in collaborative management and decision-making.

## **Goal 7. Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all**

84. Despite significant progress over the past decade on improving access to electricity, increasing renewable energy use in the electricity sector and improving energy efficiency, the world is still falling short in providing affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all. Clean and sustainable energy should be at the heart of the COVID-19 response and of efforts to combat climate change.

85. Global access to electricity increased from 83 per cent in 2010 to 90 per cent in 2019, with an increase in average annual electrification of 0.876 percentage points. The global access deficit decreased from 1.22 billion in 2010 to 759 million in 2019. Despite the significant effort made, there may still be as many as 660 million people without access worldwide in 2030. In addition, the COVID-19 pandemic will impede progress on future electrification.

86. In 2019, 66 per cent of the global population had access to clean cooking fuels and technologies. For the period 2010–2019, most of the increases in such access occurred in the most populous low- and middle-income countries and territories: Brazil, China, India, Indonesia and Pakistan. People reliant on polluting fuels and technologies are exposed to high levels of household air pollution with serious consequences for their cardiovascular and respiratory systems, increasing their vulnerability to diseases including the COVID-19 virus.

87. The share of renewable energy in total final energy consumption increased gradually from 16.4 per cent in 2010 to 17.1 per cent in 2018. However, the share of modern renewable sources in total final energy consumption rose by only 2.5 percentage points in a decade, remaining below 11 per cent in 2018. The pandemic is having a mixed impact on renewable energy development across end-use sectors: global electricity demand declined by 2 per cent in 2020 compared to 2019, but the use of renewables for power generation increased by almost 7 per cent year on year.

88. Global primary energy intensity increased from 5.6 megajoules per dollar of gross domestic product (GDP) in 2010 to 4.8 megajoules in 2018, an average annual rate of improvement of 2 per cent. While early estimates for 2019 also indicate an improvement of 2 per cent, the outlook for 2020 suggests a rate of only 0.8 per cent because of the pandemic. Annual improvement until 2030 will need to average 3 per cent if the Goal 7.3 target is to be met.

89. International financial flows to developing countries in support of clean and renewable energy reached \$14 billion in 2018, 35 per cent lower than in 2017 but 32 per cent higher than in 2010. Hydropower projects received 27 per cent of flows in 2018, while projects relating to solar received 26 per cent, geothermal 8 per cent, wind 5 per cent and multiple or other renewable energies 34 per cent.

90. Developing countries had a renewable energy capacity of 219 watts per capita at the end of 2019, an increase of 7 per cent over the year but slightly less than the 8.8 per cent expansion in per capita capacity for 2018. Per capita hydropower capacity remained stable in 2019, as total capacity increased in line with population growth during the year at approximately 0.4 per cent. Solar and wind capacities both expanded much faster than population growth, leading to increases in per capita capacity of 22.2 and 11.3 per cent, respectively.

## **Goal 8. Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all**

91. Before the start of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, the average growth of the global economy had already slowed. The pandemic has caused the worst global economic recession since the Great Depression and has had a massive impact on working times and incomes. In 2020, 8.8 per cent of global working hours were lost compared to the figure for the fourth quarter of 2019, which is equivalent to 255 million full-time jobs and approximately four times greater than the hours lost during the global financial crisis in 2009. Young people and women in the workforce were hit particularly hard by the crisis in the labour market. The global economy is slowly recovering, although activity may remain below pre-pandemic levels for a prolonged period.

92. Following average growth of about 2 per cent from 2014 to 2018, global real GDP per capita increased by only 1.3 per cent in 2019 and is estimated to have declined by 5.3 per cent in 2020 owing to the pandemic. Global real GDP per capita is projected to increase again by 3.6 per cent in 2021 and 2.6 per cent in 2022.

93. The real GDP of the least developed countries increased by 4.8 per cent in 2019 and is estimated to have fallen by 1.3 per cent in 2020 because of the disruption caused by the pandemic.

94. Before the onset of the pandemic, informal employment accounted for 60.2 per cent of global employment, equivalent to 2 billion people with informal jobs characterized by a lack of basic protection, including social protection coverage. More than three quarters, 1.6 billion informal workers, were significantly affected by the pandemic-related lockdown measures or were working in the sectors hardest hit.

They are at high risk of falling into poverty and will experience greater challenges in regaining their livelihoods during the recovery.

95. The median gender pay gap in countries and territories with data from around 2017 is close to 12 per cent, indicating that women's hourly earnings are an average of 12 per cent lower than those of men in half of all countries and territories with data. However, this gender pay gap is an approximate calculation based on average hourly earnings without controlling for sector, occupation, educational level or work experience. In a global study, the International Labour Organization identified a factor-weighted gender pay gap of 19 per cent. In 87 per cent of countries and territories with recent data, professionals earn more than double that of workers in elementary occupations per hour on average.

96. Global unemployment increased by 33 million in 2020, with the unemployment rate increasing by 1.1 percentage points to 6.5 per cent. However, unemployment figures reflect only a small proportion of the jobs lost as a result of the pandemic. A further 81 million people were not actively seeking employment or were simply unable to find employment owing to the COVID-19-related restrictions. Young people and women were particularly hard hit by the crisis, with employment losses in 2020 of 8.7 and 5 per cent, respectively, compared to 3.7 per cent for all adults and 3.9 per cent for men.

97. In 2019, more than one in five of the world's young people were not in employment, education or training, a proportion almost unchanged since 2005. Quarterly figures indicate that the rate increased from the fourth quarter of 2019 to the second quarter of 2020 in 42 out of 49 countries and territories with data. As young women were already twice as likely as young men not to be in employment, education or training, and as women have been forced into inactivity disproportionately during the pandemic, the COVID-19 crisis is likely to worsen the gender gap among young people not in employment, education or training.

98. The level of national compliance with the fundamental labour rights of freedom of association and collective bargaining changed little between 2015 and 2018.

99. Global GDP from tourism increased at a higher rate than the rest of the economy over the decade preceding 2019 to account for 4.1 per cent of global GDP in 2019, compared to 3.7 per cent in 2008. However, as one of the sectors hardest hit by the pandemic, a reversal in this trend is expected for 2020 and the coming years. Globally, international arrivals decreased by 74 per cent in 2020 compared to 2019, which represents a loss of \$1.3 trillion in inbound tourism expenditure, more than 11 times the loss resulting from the 2009 global crisis. An estimated 100 to 120 million tourism jobs are at risk because of the pandemic, with a disproportionate effect on women. While the tourism sectors of virtually all countries and territories in the world are affected, the small island developing States suffer most acutely.

100. Globally, the number of automated teller machines per 100,000 adults rose by more than 50 per cent during the past decade, from 45 in 2010 to 69 in 2019. However, there was a slight reversal in the trend for commercial bank branches, with the number of branches in 2019 marginally lower than that recorded in 2010.

101. In 2019, aid for trade commitments decreased by 6 per cent to \$53 billion on the basis of current prices. The sectors most represented were energy (27.9 per cent of total aid for trade), transport and storage (22.6 per cent) and agriculture (17.8 per cent).

102. In 2020, almost one third of the 107 countries and territories with data had formulated and operationalized a youth employment strategy, while 44 (41.1 per cent) had such strategies but did not provide conclusive evidence of their implementation, and just under one quarter (24.3 per cent) were in the process of developing a strategy.

## **Goal 9. Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation**

103. In the year before the COVID-19 pandemic triggered the greatest economic crisis in decades, manufacturing value added had seen the slowest year-on-year growth rate since 2012, primarily because of tariff and trade tensions between the most dominant economies. The pandemic has hit the manufacturing and transport industries hard, causing job losses and declining incomes for workers in those sectors. The crisis poses unprecedented challenges for global value chains by disrupting both the supply of and the demand for goods. Small-scale industries have been severely affected, and many continue to face existential challenges. However, the COVID-19 crisis also offers opportunities to foster industrialization and bring groundbreaking technologies to developing countries.

104. According to data from 2018 and 2019 on the 25 countries and territories in Africa, Asia, South America, Central Asia and the Middle East for which the Rural Access Index of the World Bank was updated using a spatial method, almost 300 million out of 520 million rural dwellers still lack reliable access to roads.

105. Growth in maritime freight volumes and global container port traffic weakened in 2019, expanding at the marginal rates of 0.5 and 2 per cent, respectively, compared to 2018. As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, the volume of international maritime freight is expected to have fallen by 4.1 per cent and global container port traffic by 2.1 per cent in 2020.

106. The pandemic affected manufacturing by disrupting global value chains and restricting the movement of people and goods, resulting in a significant drop of 8.4 per cent in manufacturing production in 2020. The global share of manufacturing value added in GDP fell from 16.5 per cent in 2019 to 15.9 per cent in 2020.

107. Manufacturing in the least developed countries is expected to have grown by a negligible 1.2 per cent in 2020, compared to 8.7 per cent in 2019, helping the least developed countries to increase their share of manufacturing value added to 12.8 per cent in 2020 from 10.1 per cent in 2010. However, the growth rate is too slow to meet the target of doubling the share of industry in GDP by 2030. Manufacturing value added per capita in 2020 was only \$135 in the least developed countries, compared to \$4,194 in Europe and Northern America.

108. In 2019, 13.7 per cent of global workers, or 454 million people, were employed in manufacturing, one of the sectors hardest hit by the pandemic. Across 49 countries and territories with data, manufacturing employment declined by an average of 5.6 and 2.5 per cent in the second and third quarters of 2020, respectively, compared to the same periods in 2019.

109. Small-scale industries have been significantly affected by the pandemic, and many continue to face existential challenges. According to survey data for the period from 2006 to 2020, 29.3 per cent of small-scale entrepreneurs benefited from loans or lines of credit before the crisis, with some regional differences. Only 15.7 per cent of small-scale industries in sub-Saharan Africa received those forms of credit, compared to 44 per cent in Latin America and the Caribbean.

110. Global carbon dioxide emissions from fuel combustion declined slightly in 2019 from a historic high of 33.5 billion tons in 2018, owing mainly to changes in power sources in advanced economies and milder weather conditions across the continents. Global carbon dioxide emissions from manufacturing continued their decline since 2014 and accounted for 5.9 billion tons in 2018. Although the world experienced a remarkable drop in carbon dioxide emissions as a result of national lockdowns and



travel restrictions in 2020, most economies are likely to resume their usual levels of carbon dioxide emissions as soon as the lockdown measures are lifted.

111. The proportion of global GDP invested in research and development rose at a satisfactory pace, from 1.61 per cent in 2010 to 1.73 per cent in 2018. However, countries and territories in most of the developing regions fell short of the world average, some spending less than 1 per cent of GDP on research and development.

112. Globally, there has been an increase in the number of researchers per million population from 1,022 in 2010 to 1,235 in 2018, ranging from 3,847 in Europe and Northern America to only 99 in sub-Saharan Africa. In addition, women represented only 30.5 per cent of global researchers in 2018.

113. Total official flows for economic infrastructure in developing countries reached \$63.6 billion in 2019, an increase of 39.6 per cent in real terms since 2010. The main sectors assisted were transport (\$21.3 billion), and banking and financial services (\$15.3 billion).

114. In 2018, the share of medium- and high-technology manufacturing in total manufacturing was 49 per cent in developed regions and 41.4 per cent in developing regions, compared to only 8.9 per cent in the least developed countries. The pandemic affected different industries unequally. Medium- and high-technology industries, such as the pharmaceutical, computer, electronics and automotive sectors, have recovered faster from the crisis than industries involving a lower technological intensity.

115. The roll-out of mobile broadband networks slowed in 2020. Almost 85 per cent of the global population was covered by a 4G network at the end of 2020, following a twofold increase in coverage since 2015. However, annual growth has been slowing gradually since 2017, with the result that coverage in 2020 was only 1.3 percentage points higher than in 2019.

## **Goal 10. Reduce inequality within and among countries**

116. Before the pandemic, modest gains had been made in the reduction of inequality in certain areas, for example, reducing income inequality in some countries and territories, continuing preferential trade status for lower-income countries and territories and decreasing transaction costs for remittances. However, inequality persists, whether in relation to income, wealth, opportunity or other dimensions. The pandemic is exacerbating existing inequalities within and among countries and territories and hitting the most vulnerable people and the poorest countries and territories hardest, and is likely to delay the progress of the poorest countries and territories on the Goals by a full 10 years. Globally, the number of refugees reached its highest level on record in 2020. Even with strict COVID-19-related restrictions on mobility around the world, thousands of migrants died on their migratory journey.

117. According to estimates of the International Monetary Fund, the COVID-19 pandemic would increase the average Gini index for emerging market and developing economies by more than 6 per cent, with an even larger impact predicted for low-income countries and territories.<sup>4</sup>

118. Data from 44 countries and territories for the period 2014–2020 show that almost one in five people reported having personally experienced discrimination on at least one of the grounds prohibited under international human rights law. Moreover, women were more likely to be victims of discrimination than men. The health and

<sup>4</sup> International Monetary Fund, *World Economic Outlook: A Long and Difficult Ascent* (Washington, D.C., 2020).

socioeconomic situations of many groups already experiencing higher levels of discrimination have been further affected by the pandemic.

119. The data from 2019 on financial soundness indicators indicated some improvement of overall loan performance, while the levels of capital, which is the main buffer for absorbing losses, remained high despite a slight decline. The share of countries and territories reporting non-performing loans whose value exceeds 5 per cent of total loans declined from 41.9 per cent in 2018 to 39.5 per cent in 2019. Meanwhile, the share of countries and territories reporting a ratio of total regulatory capital to risk weighted assets of more than 15 per cent declined from 84.6 per cent in 2018 to 82.1 per cent in 2019, although the median rose from 17.9 per cent to 18.2 per cent over the same period.

120. In 2020, 4,186 deaths and disappearances were recorded along migratory routes worldwide, with an increase in fatalities on some routes. Despite the pandemic and mobility restrictions at borders across the world, tens of thousands of people continued to leave their homes and embark on dangerous journeys across deserts and seas.

121. By mid-2020, the number of people who had fled their countries and territories and become refugees owing to war, conflict, persecution, human rights violations and events seriously disturbing public order had grown to 24 million, the highest number on record. The number of refugees outside their country of origin has risen to 307 out of every 100,000 persons, more than double the figure at the end of 2010.

122. Globally, in 2019, 54 per cent of the 111 Governments with data reported having instituted a comprehensive set of policy measures to facilitate orderly, safe, regular and responsible migration and mobility of people, which means that they have reported having policy measures in place for at least 80 per cent of the subcategories that make up the six policy domains of this indicator. The degree to which the policy measures were reported, however, varies widely across policy domains, with most countries and territories reporting measures for cooperation and partnerships and for safe, orderly and regular migration, and fewest countries and territories reporting measures for migrant rights and for socioeconomic well-being.

123. From 2017 to 2020, the proportion of products exported by the least developed countries and developing countries that receive duty-free treatment has remained unchanged at 66 and 52 per cent, respectively.

124. In 2019, total resource flows for development to developing countries from Development Assistance Committee donors, multilateral agencies and other key providers amounted to \$400 billion, of which \$164 billion was ODA.

125. The average global cost of sending a \$200 remittance decreased from 9.3 per cent in 2011 to 6.5 per cent in 2020, bringing it closer to the international target of 5 per cent. The average annual decrease was 0.31 percentage points.

## **Goal 11. Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable**

126. Before the pandemic, cities had rising numbers of slum dwellers, worsening air pollution, minimal open public spaces and limited convenient access to public transport. The direct and indirect impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic are making it even more unlikely that this Goal will be achieved, with more people forced to live in slums, where quality of life is deteriorating and vulnerability increasing.

127. The number of slum dwellers has continued to grow over the years, exceeding 1 billion in 2018. Slum dwellers are most prevalent in the three regions of Eastern

and South-Eastern Asia (370 million), sub-Saharan Africa (238 million) and Central and Southern Asia (226 million).

128. According to data from 2019 for 610 cities in 95 countries and territories, about half of the urban population has convenient access to public transport, defined as living within a walking distance of 500 metres to low-capacity transport systems, such as buses or trams, and 1,000 metres to high-capacity systems, such as trains and ferries. As a result of the COVID-19 response measures imposed in countries and territories throughout 2020, access to public transport in cities worldwide was significantly disrupted, from partial closures and reduced capacities to total closure of networks.

129. Data collected for a sample of 911 cities from 114 countries and territories in 2020 indicate that between 1990 and 2019, spatial urbanization occurred at a much faster rate than population growth, and smaller cities were being urbanized more quickly than their larger counterparts. On average, all regions except sub-Saharan Africa and Eastern and South-Eastern Asia recorded a consistent increase in built-up area per capita, with the highest values in Australia and New Zealand.

130. Data on a sample of 911 cities from 114 countries and territories indicate that the share of urban area allocated to streets and open public spaces averaged only about 16 per cent globally in 2020, well below the allocation recommended by United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat) of 30 per cent for streets and an additional 10 to 15 per cent for open public spaces.

131. As of March 2021, 156 countries and territories have developed national urban policies, almost half of which are already at the implementation stage. Of these countries and territories, 38 per cent are in the early stages of plan development, while 13 per cent are monitoring and evaluating the performance of their plans.

## **Goal 12. Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns**

132. For decades, scientists have been explaining the ways in which humanity is driving the three planetary crises of climate, biodiversity and pollution, all of which are linked to unsustainable production and consumption. Changes in consumption and production patterns can help to promote the decoupling of economic growth and human well-being from resource use and environmental impact. They can also trigger the transformations envisaged in global commitments on biodiversity, the climate, and sustainable development in general. The COVID-19 pandemic provides a window of opportunity for exploring more inclusive and equitable development models that are underpinned by sustainable consumption and production.

133. From 2017 to 2020, 83 countries, territories and the European Union shared information on their contribution to the implementation of the 10-Year Framework of Programmes on Sustainable Consumption and Production Patterns. In 2020, 136 policies and 27 implementation activities were reported, bringing the total number to over 700. While specific actions have been taken to improve resource use efficiency in a specific industry or area, this has not resulted in their widespread adoption across sectors and industries.

134. Data indicate a rise of almost 40 per cent in the global material footprint per capita, from 8.8 metric tons in 2000 to 12.2 metric tons in 2017. Similarly, domestic material consumption per capita increased by more than 40 per cent, from 8.7 metric tons in 2000 to 12.2 metric tons in 2017.

135. Although limited data are available, as of 2016, almost 14 per cent of food produced globally was lost before reaching the retail sector. Estimates vary across

regions, from 20.7 per cent in Central and Southern Asia to 5.8 per cent in Australia and New Zealand.

136. In 2019, the amount of e-waste generated was 7.3 kg per capita, with only 1.7 kg per capita documented to be managed in an environmentally sustainable manner. E-waste generation is expected to grow by 0.16 kg per capita annually to reach 9 kg per capita in 2030. The annual rate of growth in e-waste recycling over the past decade was 0.05 kg per capita, which will need to increase more than tenfold if all e-waste is to be recycled by 2030.

137. A pilot review conducted in 2020 on a random sample of about 4,000 companies in the United Nations Global Compact database and the Sustainability Disclosure database of the Global Reporting Initiative indicates that 85 per cent of companies reported on minimum requirements for sustainability issues and 40 per cent on advanced requirements for such issues.

138. As of December 2020, 40 countries and territories had reported on sustainable public procurement policies and action plans or equivalent legal dispositions aimed at encouraging the procurement of environmentally sound, energy-efficient products and promoting more socially responsible purchasing practices and sustainable supply chains.

139. Fossil fuel subsidies declined in 2019 to \$431.6 billion as a result of lower fuel prices, reversing the upward trend from 2017 to 2018. Fossil fuel subsidies are expected to fall sharply owing to the collapse in demand caused by COVID-19 mitigation efforts and the oil price shock experienced in 2020.

### **Goal 13. Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts**

140. Atmospheric concentrations of the major greenhouse gases continued to increase despite the temporary reduction in emissions in 2020 related to measures taken in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. The six years from 2015 to 2020 are likely to be the warmest on record. Climate change is making the achievement of many Goals less likely. To limit global warming to 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels in accordance with the Paris Agreement, the world would need to achieve net zero carbon dioxide emissions by around 2050.

141. As of April 2020, 118 countries and territories had reported the development and adoption of national or local disaster risk reduction strategies, an increase from 48 countries and territories in the first year of the Sendai Framework.

142. As at 31 December 2020, 190 parties (189 countries and territories plus the European Union) had communicated their first nationally determined contribution to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, of which 44 were least developed countries and 40 were small island developing States. A further 48 countries and territories, of which one is a least developed country and five are small island developing States, have also communicated a second or updated nationally determined contribution. Of these 48 countries and territories, 39 included adaptation information in their new or updated contribution. The nationally determined contributions demonstrate that countries and territories are articulating more quantified targets and indicators for adaptation and identifying links between adaptation, the Goals and other frameworks.

143. As at 31 March 2021, 125 of 154 developing countries were carrying out measures for national adaptation plans and prioritizing the formulation and implementation of the plans in their adaptation efforts. Moreover, six least developed

countries (including three small island developing States) and another four small island developing States have completed a national adaptation plan. Further least developed countries have draft national adaptation plans and are on track to complete and submit these with a view to ensuring that all least developed countries have national adaptation plans by 2021.

144. According to scientists, global emissions should be cut to 45 per cent below 2010 levels by 2030 in order to limit global warming to 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels. Emissions from developed countries were approximately 6.2 per cent lower in 2019 than in 2010, while emissions from 70 developing countries rose by 14.4 per cent in 2014.

145. Total climate finance reported by States parties included in annex I to the Framework Convention on Climate Change continues to increase, reaching an annual average of \$48.7 billion in the period 2017–2018. This represents an increase of 10 per cent compared to the 2015–2016 period. While more than half of all climate-specific financial support in the 2017 and 2018 was targeted at mitigation action, the share of adaptation support is growing, and many countries and territories are prioritizing adaptation in their financial support provision.

#### **Goal 14. Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development**

146. More than 3 billion people rely on the oceans for their livelihoods, and more than 80 per cent of world merchandise trade by volume is carried by sea. The oceans, seas and marine resources are under constant threat from pollution, warming and acidification that are disrupting marine ecosystems and the communities they support. These changes have long-term repercussions that require the world to urgently scale up the protection of marine environments, investment in ocean science, support for small-scale fishery communities, and the sustainable management of the oceans.

147. While efforts to reduce nutrient inputs into coastal zones are showing success in some regions, algal blooms indicate that coastal eutrophication continues to be a challenge. Globally, anomalies of chlorophyll-a (the pigment responsible for photosynthesis in all plants and algae) in national exclusive economic zones decreased by 20 per cent from 2018 to 2020.

148. Ocean acidification is caused by the absorption of atmospheric carbon dioxide by the ocean, resulting in a decreasing pH and threatening marine organisms and ocean-based services. A limited set of long-term observation sites in the open ocean have observed a continuous decline in pH over the past 20 to 30 years.

149. Mean protected area coverage of marine key biodiversity areas increased globally from 28 per cent in 2000 to 44 per cent in 2020. However, there is considerable geographical variation in this progress, with coverage still less than one quarter of key biodiversity areas in Oceania (excluding Australia and New Zealand).

150. Improved regulation, together with effective monitoring and surveillance, has proved successful in restoring overfished stocks to biologically sustainable levels. However, the adoption of such measures has generally been slow, in many developing countries in particular. In 13 countries and territories that have active assessment and management systems in place, the proportion of fish stocks within biologically sustainable levels is higher than the world average of 65.8 per cent, according to data collected in 2019.

151. Between 2018 and 2020, the average degree of implementation of international instruments to combat illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing improved around

the world, with the global score measuring the implementation of the five principal instruments rising from 3 to 4 out of 5. Almost 75 per cent of States scored highly in their degree of implementation in 2020, compared to 70 per cent of States in 2018.

152. Between 2018 and 2020, the world made progress in implementing regulatory and institutional frameworks that recognize and protect access rights for small-scale fisheries, with the global score rising from 3 to 4. At the regional level, Northern Africa and Western Asia made this progress, while the regional score for Central and Southern Asia fell from 3 to 2, highlighting the need for efforts there to be redoubled and demonstrating that there is no room for complacency.

153. Sustainable fisheries accounted for approximately 0.1 per cent of global GDP in 2017, while contributing more than 0.5 per cent of GDP in certain regions and the least developed countries. The sustainable management of fish stocks remains critical to ensuring that fisheries continue to generate economic growth and support equitable development. The long-term impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on fisheries poses significant challenges that threaten to undermine sustainable stock management and profitability.

154. On average, only 1.2 per cent of national research budgets was allocated to ocean science between 2013 and 2017, with amounts ranging from 0.02 per cent to 9.5 per cent. This is a small proportion in view of the conservatively estimated \$1.5 trillion contribution of the ocean to the global economy in 2010.

155. Many States have ratified or acceded to the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (168 parties) and its implementing agreements (150 parties for the Agreement relating to the implementation of Part XI of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea and 91 parties for the United Nations Fish Stocks Agreement). A number of States have implemented these instruments through legal, policy and institutional frameworks, but further progress is needed in some developing countries, in particular the least developed countries.

### **Goal 15. Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss**

156. Deforestation and forest degradation, continued biodiversity loss and the ongoing degradation of ecosystems are having profound consequences for human well-being and survival. The world fell short on 2020 targets to halt biodiversity loss. The COVID-19 pandemic has shown that, by threatening biodiversity, humanity threatens its own survival. While great efforts are being made to expand sustainable forest management, increase coverage of key biodiversity areas and sign up to legislation and treaties for protecting biodiversity and ecosystems, much more needs to be done to put the health of the planet at the centre of all plans and policies.

157. While the rate of deforestation in tropical regions has slowed in the past decade, vigilance and targeted efforts are required to maintain this trend. The proportion of forest area fell from 31.9 per cent of total land area in 2000 to 31.2 per cent in 2020, representing a net loss of almost 100 million hectares of the world's forests. From 2000 to 2020, forest area increased in Asia, Europe and Northern America, but decreased significantly in Latin America and sub-Saharan Africa. Despite the losses in forest cover, above-ground forest biomass per hectare, the proportion of forest area in protected areas and under long-term management plans, and certified forest area all increased or remained stable at the global level and in most of the regions of the world, demonstrating global progress towards sustainable forest management.

158. In 2020, an average of 43 per cent of each terrestrial key biodiversity area, 42 per cent of each freshwater key biodiversity area, and 41 per cent of each mountain key biodiversity area were within protected areas, an increase of 13 to 14 percentage points since 2000.

159. As of February 2021, 127 countries and territories had committed to setting voluntary targets for achieving land degradation neutrality, and 68 countries and territories had already officially endorsed their targets. Overall, commitments to land restoration are estimated to amount to 1 billion hectares, of which 450 million hectares are covered by commitments through land degradation neutrality targets.

160. Data based on satellite imagery reveal that green coverage (forests, grasslands, croplands and wetlands) of the world's mountains remained steady at about 73 per cent between 2000 and 2018. Green cover tends to be greater in mountain areas that are less than 2,500 metres above sea level. However, mountain green cover varies considerably across geographical regions, ranging from 100 per cent in Oceania to 68 per cent in Northern Africa and Western Asia.

161. Globally, the risk of species extinction has increased by about 10 per cent over the past three decades. The Red List Index, which ranges from a value of 1 to indicate no risk of extinction to a value of 0 to indicate the extinction of all species, decreased from 0.81 in 1993 to 0.73 in 2021.

162. As at 1 February 2021, 128 countries, territories and the European Union had ratified the Nagoya Protocol on Access to Genetic Resources and the Fair and Equitable Sharing of Benefits Arising from their Utilization to the Convention on Biological Diversity, which is an increase of 60 countries and territories since 2016, and 67 countries, territories and the European Union have shared information on their Nagoya Protocol frameworks. There are now 148 parties to the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture, and so far, 57 countries and territories have provided information about the measures that they have taken to implement the Nagoya Protocol.

163. The pandemic and the vast subsequent harm to human and economic well-being have starkly illustrated the potential global impact of zoonotic diseases, for which wildlife trade – both legal and illegal – is a potential vector. While certain markets for illegal wildlife products are declining, such as the market for ivory, which has decreased 3.5-fold since 2013, other species are under increasing threat as offenders shift their focus to more lucrative products, such as pangolin scales. In 2018, for example, there was a tenfold increase in the number of whole pangolin equivalents seized since 2014.

164. Nearly all countries and territories (98 per cent) have adopted national legislation for the prevention or control of invasive alien species, although there is wide variation in its coverage across sectors. The proportion of countries and territories aligning their targets for invasive alien species with global targets has increased, from 74 per cent in 2016 to 84 per cent in 2020.

165. As of March 2021, 89 countries and territories have implemented the system of environmental economic accounting, an increase of 29 per cent since 2017. Of these, 62 countries and territories (70 per cent) have integrated the system of accounting into their regular statistical production methods, and compile and publish the accounts on a regular basis.

166. In 2019, ODA from Development Assistance Committee members provided in support of biodiversity amounted to \$6.6 billion, a decrease of 14 per cent in real terms compared to 2018. In 2021, a total of 232 biodiversity-relevant taxes are in force across 62 countries and territories.

## **Goal 16. Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels**

167. The world is still a long way from achieving the goal of building peaceful, just and inclusive societies, with millions of people living in fragile and conflict-affected States. At the end of 2019, 79.5 million people had been forcibly displaced worldwide, equivalent to 1 per cent of the global population. The COVID-19 pandemic has exposed inequalities and discrimination and has tested, weakened, and in some cases shattered rights and protection systems in countries and territories.

168. Globally, around 437,000 people were victims of homicide in 2019. However, lethal violence is slowly decreasing, and homicide rates declined from 6 victims per 100,000 population in 2015 to 5.7 per 100,000 in 2019. Two thirds of all homicide victims were in sub-Saharan Africa and Latin America and the Caribbean, with no sign of numbers falling in sub-Saharan Africa.

169. The United Nations recorded 69,276 civilian deaths in 12 of the world's deadliest armed conflicts between 2018 and 2020. In 2020, there were five civilians killed per 100,000 population, one in seven of which was a woman or child.

170. Even before the pandemic, violence against children was widespread, affecting victims regardless of wealth or social status. In 77 mostly low- and middle-income countries and territories with available data from 2012 to 2020, 8 in 10 children, ranging from 1 to 14 years of age, had been subjected to some form of psychological aggression or physical punishment at home in the previous month.

171. In 2018, some 5 in 10 victims of human trafficking detected globally were women and 2 in 10 were girls. Moreover, about one third of all detected victims were children. About 50 per cent of the detected victims were trafficked for sexual exploitation and 38 per cent for forced labour. The sharp rise in unemployment brought about by the pandemic is likely to increase trafficking in persons.

172. Globally, the proportion of prisoners held in detention in 2019 without being sentenced for a crime remained high at 31 per cent of the total prison population, with no significant change since 2000.

173. Data from more than 120 countries and territories indicate that people living in low-income countries and territories are those most exposed to bribery. According to the latest data available for the period from 2011 to 2020, the average prevalence of bribery in low-income countries and territories is 37.6 per cent, compared to 7.2 per cent in high-income countries and territories.

174. Establishment-level data from 145 countries and territories surveyed between 2006 and 2020 indicate that almost one business in six around the world is subject to requests from public officials for bribe payments.

175. Globally as of January 2021, 31.1 per cent of parliamentarians are 45 years of age or less, up from 28.1 per cent in 2018. Male parliamentarians remain predominant in the leadership positions of speaker and committee chair.

176. According to data for the period from 2010 to 2020, the births of around one in four children under 5 years of age worldwide were not officially recorded. Only 45 per cent of all children under 5 in sub-Saharan Africa had their births registered.

177. In 2020, the United Nations tracked 331 killings of human rights defenders in 32 countries and territories, an 18 per cent increase on 2019, and 19 enforced disappearances in 14 countries and territories. Women comprised 13 per cent of victims killed and 22 per cent of those forcibly disappeared. A total of 62 journalists



were killed in 2020 compared to 57 in 2019, with 65 per cent killed in non-conflict countries and territories.

178. As of February 2021, laws on access to information have been adopted by 127 countries and territories, although the implementation of the laws could be improved. The pandemic has slowed the pace of progress in this area, with no countries or territories passing such laws in 2020 and a number of countries and territories temporarily suspending existing legal guarantees. Nevertheless, many countries and territories attempted to make data available concerning COVID-19 infections, the contracting of emergency equipment and the allocation of rescue packages and relief financing.

179. In 2020, the number of independently functioning national human rights institutions in sub-Saharan Africa and Europe increased by three, raising the proportion of countries and territories that had successfully achieved compliance with the Principles and Guidelines on Children Associated with Armed Forces or Armed Groups to 42 per cent. However, progress has stalled in Latin America and the Caribbean, Oceania, Western Asia, and Eastern and South-Eastern Asia, where no new independent national human rights institutions have been recognized or established since 2018.

## **Goal 17. Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development**

180. With multilateral and global partnerships already challenged by scarce financial resources, trade tensions, technological obstacles and a lack of data, the COVID-19 pandemic has administered an unprecedented shock to the global system. In addition, there is severe pressure on FDI, which is expected to fall by 40 per cent. The fiscal impacts of the pandemic are leading to debt distress in countries and territories and limiting their fiscal and policy space for critical investments in recovery (including accessing vaccines), climate change and the Goals, which threatens to prolong recovery periods. The pandemic has focused attention on the crucial role of global partnerships. The interconnected global economy requires a global response to ensure that all countries and territories, in particular developing countries, can address the compounding and parallel health, economic and environmental crises in order to recover better.

### **Finance**

181. As of 2019, across approximately 130 economies, government revenue, including taxes, social contributions and grants, accounts for approximately 33 per cent of GDP on average. In addition, the average overall tax burden or revenue in the form of taxes is 25 per cent of GDP in advanced economies and 17 per cent of GDP in emerging market and developing economies. The average proportion of government expenditure funded by taxes is 67 per cent in advanced economies and 62 per cent in emerging market and developing economies.

182. Net ODA flows were \$161 billion in 2020, an increase of 7 per cent in real terms compared to 2019 and the highest level ever recorded. This is equivalent to 0.32 per cent of the combined gross national income of Development Assistance Committee donors, up from 0.3 per cent in 2019 but below the target of 0.7 per cent of gross national income for ODA. The increase in ODA is owing in part to the support of Committee members for an inclusive global recovery in the light of the pandemic and in part to an increase in bilateral sovereign lending by some lending members.

183. Global flows of FDI were under severe pressure in 2020. These vital resources are expected to have fallen by 40 per cent from \$1.5 trillion in 2019 to less than \$1 trillion for the first time since 2005, undoing the already lacklustre growth in international investment over the past decade. International private sector investment flows to developing and transition economies in sectors relevant for the Goals were also on course to fall by about one third in 2020.

184. Despite the COVID-19 pandemic, remittance flows to low- and middle-income countries and territories reached \$540 billion in 2020, just 1.6 per cent below the total of \$548 billion for 2019.

185. By the end of 2020, the cumulative number of countries and territories that have signed or adopted bilateral investment treaties with the least developed countries and developing economies reached 121 and 183, respectively. The number of countries and territories with bilateral investment treaties in force or implemented reached 102 and 173, respectively. The rate of new countries and territories signing such treaties has slowed in recent years, following a rapid increase in the 1990s.

### **Information and communications technology**

186. As of 2019, just over half of the world's population was online, with a large digital divide observed among regions. For example, while 85 per cent of the population in Europe and Northern America had Internet access, only 20 per cent were connected in the least developed countries.

187. While fixed-broadband subscriptions continue to increase, growth in subscriptions slowed to 2.7 per cent in 2020. In developed countries, there were more than 33 subscriptions per 100 inhabitants, representing a high penetration rate, while the number in developing countries stood at 11.5 per 100 inhabitants. In the least developed countries, fixed networks are almost completely absent, with only 1.3 subscriptions per 100 inhabitants.

### **Capacity-building**

188. Total ODA for capacity-building and national planning amounted to \$35.9 billion in 2019 and represented 14 per cent of total sector allocable aid, a figure that has been stable since 2010. The main sectors assisted were energy policy, public administration and the financial sector, which received a total of \$13.8 billion.

### **Trade**

189. For the period from 2017 to 2019, the worldwide weighted tariff average has remained steady at around 2 per cent. Agriculture and clothing still have the highest tariff averages at around 6 per cent, followed by textiles at around 4 per cent. In 2019, small but relatively more significant improvements were recorded for two important sectors, textiles and clothing, in the least developed countries and developing countries.

190. The share of least developed country exports in global merchandise trade remained constant at 1 per cent in 2019, having stagnated over the past decade after significant improvement from 2000 to 2010. The target of doubling the share of least developed country exports worldwide to 2 per cent by 2020 from their 2011 level is unlikely to be achieved. For developing countries, the share in world merchandise exports has remained constant at about 45 per cent since 2012. In 2019, the share of the least developed countries in world services exports stood at 0.8 per cent, while the share of developing countries in those exports has levelled off since 2012, reaching 30.2 per cent in 2019.

191. After reaching its lowest level of 1.1 per cent in 2011, the average tariff applied by developed countries to imports from developing and least developed countries in 2019 has remained unchanged owing to a lack of new commitments by developed countries. At the sectoral level, clothing and textiles have remained stable at their peak of 8 and 5 per cent, respectively, since 2011.

#### **Data, monitoring and accountability**

192. From 2016 to 2018, the extent to which development cooperation providers used country-owned results frameworks and planning tools in the design and monitoring of new development projects decreased from 64 per cent to 62 per cent on average. Multilateral providers use the frameworks and planning tools for those purposes to a larger extent than bilateral providers (66 per cent compared to 57 per cent).

193. Of 114 countries and territories providing or receiving development cooperation, fewer than half (56 countries and territories) reported overall progress in 2018 towards strengthening multi-stakeholder partnerships for development with a view to achieving the Goals.

194. In 2020, 122 Member States reported having national statistical legislation that was compliant with the Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics. The proportions of compliant Member States exceed 40 per cent for almost all regions and country groups, except for the least developed countries, which also experienced their fastest progress before 2020. Nevertheless, 2020 was the year in which the least progress was made since 2015.

195. Also in 2020, 132 countries and territories reported implementing a national statistical plan, with 84 having fully funded plans. Only 4 out of 46 (8 per cent) of the least developed countries reported having fully funded national statistical plans. Countries and territories could face more difficulties in implementing and funding national statistical plans owing to rescheduled and costly activities, such as census and household surveys, that were postponed until 2021 because of the pandemic.

196. ODA for data and statistics increased from \$591 million in 2015 to \$693 million in 2018. Almost every region received more support in 2017 and 2018 than from 2015 to 2016. Despite the progress made in the first four years, the trend of support for data and statistics may be reaching a bottleneck, as nowcasts indicated that there was no significant increase in 2019. While the need for reliable data continues to increase, including to address and mitigate the impacts of the pandemic, many countries and territories still lack the resources to produce reliable data.

197. For the period 2015–2019, 146 countries and territories have birth registration data that are at least 90 per cent complete and 151 countries and territories have death registration data that are at least 75 per cent complete. Therefore, about 60 per cent of countries and territories worldwide meet both criteria. In sub-Saharan Africa, additional countries and territories have birth and death registration data compared to the previous reporting period, increasing from 28 to 29 countries and territories for birth registration and from 53 to 55 countries and territories for death registration.