



HARNESSING CLIMATE AND SDGS SYNERGIES

Consultations on Climate and SDG Synergies for a Better and Stronger Recovery from the Covid-19 Pandemic

Technical Summary Report

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The adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Paris Agreement in 2015 established a strong foundation for coherent implementation of climate action and sustainable development objectives across all levels and sectors. The multiple interlinkages between the 2030 Agenda and the Paris Agreement indicate that integrated and synergistic implementation of both would lead to many benefits. Such an approach would considerably enhance the effectiveness and quality of outcomes, contribute to the efficient use of resources, promote coherence across sectors and among actors, and encourage the formation of novel partnerships.

It is in this context that the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs and the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change secretariat teamed up, in collaboration with other partners, to organize a series of consultations in May and June 2020 virtually due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The consultations brought together practitioners, experts and policymakers from both developing and developed countries, as well as international resource persons from academia, think tanks, the private sector and non-governmental organizations, along with and representatives of relevant United Nations organizations.

These consultations built on the findings of the first global conference on strengthening synergies between the 2030 Agenda and the Paris Agreement, held in Copenhagen in April 2019.

The 2020 consultations focused attention on the possibilities for simultaneously advancing economic recovery, climate action and SDG objectives. Contributors to these consultations expanded our understanding of climate and SDG synergies, and illustrated how such synergies can enable countries to raise their climate ambitions while also facilitating a just, sustainable and resilient recovery.

The active engagement of an unexpectedly large and diverse number of participants suggests that ideas about climate and SDG synergies resonate broadly across academia, the public, civil society, governments and the private sector. There is a widely shared understanding that pursuing climate and SDG synergies in public policy, grassroots initiatives and private sector decision-making is essential for a better and stronger recovery from the global pandemic.

It is important to note that this is not a comprehensive technical analysis on potential synergies, but rather a summary of the presentations and the key issues raised by webinar participants. The report's purpose is to capture the essence of the discussions and experiences that were shared by various practitioners in order to foster knowledge sharing.

We sincerely hope that this summary report will contribute to a better understanding and more effective promotion of synergies between climate action, sustainable development, and pandemic recovery efforts.

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KEY MESSAGES

on Leveraging Climate and SDG Synergies to Build Back Better and Stronger

The current intersecting global crises call for coordinated plans and economic stimulus investments designed to meet multiple goals. Pandemic-related stimulus measures are primarily meant to provide essential health care services and stimulate locked-down economies. However, these relatively short-term measures can also promote longer-term goals for climate protection and sustainable development, and in addition build greater resilience to meet future crises. If not planned carefully, though, they could end up supporting or locking in climate damage and unsustainable practices.

1. Climate and SDG synergies are key to a better and stronger recovery

Recovery from the pandemic will be marked by unprecedented levels of public spending and mobilization in many countries. Efforts to address the current challenges should aim to go beyond just meeting immediate health and humanitarian needs. Pandemic-related measures should also lay the foundations for greater resilience and reduce the likelihood of other global catastrophes, while assuring rapid and equitable recovery.

Some of the types of public investment, private sector initiatives, collective action and inclusive growth required to achieve the SDGs and the Paris Agreement can also help ensure a rapid, sustained and equitable recovery from the Covid-19 pandemic – particularly those that scale up

existing programmes supporting health and essential social services, and ones that boost employment opportunities related to sustainable local food production, healthy ecosystems, renewable energy and green infrastructure.

2. With innovative, integrated and far-sighted approaches countries can maximize climate and SDG co-benefits in their recovery strategies

Identify context-specific synergies

Many climate and SDG synergies are specific to particular areas or situations, and thus require local planning and analysis that intentionally bring together diverse actors to identify possible tradeoffs, overlaps and synergies between proposed policies and initiatives.

Scale up existing initiatives

The largest potential for improving lives now, plus laying the groundwork for a climate-responsible recovery and just transitions will come from expanded investments in renewable energy and green infrastructure, social protection systems, health and essential services, ecosystem restoration, and sustainable agriculture systems.

Focus on inter-related actions

Potential synergies relating to health, employment and sustainability can be found in areas such as telemedicine solutions, promotion of healthy food supplies and plant-

based diets, clean water systems to prevent disease, clean cooking solutions, support for vulnerable energy consumers, research on potential medicines from the oceans, creating bike lanes for healthy, non-polluting local transportation, building markets for sustainable food products, and promoting urban farming.

Strengthen capacities in low-income countries

Concerted, systematic and well-supported efforts are needed to analyze, implement and monitor pandemic-climate-SDG synergies.

Monitor the impacts of policies

To demonstrate synergies, create platforms for targeted data collection and analysis to capture the multiplier effects of policies, within and beyond their immediate target sector.

3. The pandemic brings new demand and opportunities for, financing, partnerships and technology to drive synergies

Financing

Pandemic-related public expenditures could potentially reduce the fiscal space for future public investments, particularly in the global South.

To help maintain and equitably build fiscal space:

- Improve availability, volume, coverage and access to financial sources, especially international sources;
- Secure adequate finance for climate adaptation and mitigation plans, including vulnerability assessments, adaptation planning, implementation, and National Determined Contributions (NDCs);
- Put in place effective financial mechanisms for programme implementation;
- Improve coordination among stakeholders (development banks, multilateral funds, national funds, aid agencies, and private companies);
- Boost private investment through greater policy certainty, and enhanced national arrangements and coordination systems.

Partnerships

Build support for synergistic government action through people-based justice mechanisms, social dialogue and civic engagement in planning. Only through full participation by all actors and effective social dialogue will a strong social consensus emerge to enable transformational change.

Technologies

More effective technology development and transfer is critical for addressing current and future challenges, yet success in this area is contingent on simultaneously tackling a variety of financial, technical, policy, legal and regulatory challenges. . Countries require support for implementing and diffusing prioritized technologies, mostly in the energy, agriculture, forestry, land use, and water sectors.

4. Countries should take advantage of potential synergies to intensify their sustainable development and climate action efforts

Multi-stakeholder initiatives play a central role in accelerating action. In dealing with the pandemic, strong political commitments by governments and multilateral cooperation will be more crucial than ever. Member States and other stakeholders should drive synergies by forming transformational partnerships that address current and future challenges in an integrated way, while also expanding their existing international commitments.

Even with the temporary dip in greenhouse gas emissions in the wake of Covid-19, current levels of ambition on climate action do not match the efforts needed for meeting the mitigation targets set out in the Paris Agreement. Countries should integrate more ambitious targets and policies into their enhanced NDCs.

At the same time, UN entities, international organizations, and multilateral development banks, as well as businesses, civil society and other stakeholders, must step up and strengthen their efforts to support the implementation of the SDGs and climate action.

5. Upcoming UN and other intergovernmental forums should be leveraged to advance climate and SDG synergies

In view of the continuing impacts of the pandemic, intergovernmental platforms in 2021 should be leveraged to help countries build back better and stronger, while also enhancing synergies to help achieve the goals of the 2030 Agenda and the Paris Agreement. Key milestones in 2021 include the UN's High-level Political Forum, the High-Level Dialogue on Energy, the Global Sustainable Transport Conference, the UN Ocean Conference, the

Biodiversity Summit, the Food Systems Summit, the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change Conference of Parties, the Fifth UN Conference on the LDCs and the Assembly of the International Renewable Energy Agency.



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2020 UN CONSULTATIONS

on Climate, Health and Inclusive Growth in the Context of Pandemic Recovery

“Working in concert, countries can draw on synergies to steer recovery. The Paris Agreement and 2030 Agenda give us a framework that can drive recovery and enable us to keep our promises to people and planet.”

UN Secretary-General António Guterres

Context

The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) has been a key driver of climate action. More than 4,000 people from over 100 countries actively engaged in the Global Consultations on Climate and SDG Synergies for a better and stronger recovery. Organized by UNDESA and UNFCCC in May and June of 2020, the consultations consisted of three webinars and a survey.

This report aims to capture key take-aways from the discussions and facilitate knowledge sharing by documenting perspectives and experiences that were shared during the online consultations and webinars. It provides a summary of key issues highlighted by the experts and does not represent a comprehensive analysis of all potential synergies. The Webinars featured experts and practitioners from seven distinct disciplines, offering perspectives that ranged from macroeconomics to oceans, and from community organizing to regional banking.

Webinar 1

UN Under-Secretary-General Liu Zhenmin, and UNFCCC Executive Secretary, Patricia Espinosa opened the first webinar, launching the Global Consultations on Synergies for a Better and Stronger Recovery to Covid-19. They called on stakeholders to integrate climate and SDG action, noting the heightened importance of harnessing synergies for pandemic recovery, and warning that without stronger action, climate change could intensify Covid-19 threats and all other challenges. The webinar focused on the challenges of planning for the future in a time of intersecting crises. Diverse practitioners and thought leaders reflected on the role of climate and SDG synergies in recovering from the Covid-19 pandemic. Panelists suggested practical measures that stakeholders can use to better account for trade-offs and harness synergies in their recovery planning process. They also explored the impact of the pandemic on countries' National Determined Contributions, considered ways for stakeholders to avoid entrenching trade-offs in their recovery strategies,

illustrated the potential of climate and SDG synergies in recovery contexts, and described how synergies can be monitored for transparency and accountability.

Webinar 2

This consultation focused on the trends and thematic opportunities that countries can tap to realize ‘quick wins’ and lay the ground for long-term climate and SDG co-benefits. Speakers discussed the policies, stimulus and financing measures that are needed to enable a better and faster recovery to Covid-19 and also accelerate just transitions to sustainable development that leave no one behind. Participants explored how stimulus and recovery measures can be designed to improve lives now and maximize climate and SDG co-benefits over a longer term. They also considered: what measures hold the most potential for impact; what emerging shifts in human behaviour, markets and finance offer potential opportunities; what is being done to enable green, inclusive recovery in low-income countries, and what additional action is needed; and how Paris Agreement and SDG processes can be leveraged.

Webinar 3

In this discussion, participants highlighted the key actions needed to strengthen the application of climate and SDG synergies in specific sectors. Speakers proposed concrete actions to leverage global deliberations on biodiversity, food, transport, and oceans, with special regard to planned intergovernmental meetings in 2021 on these issues.

Synergies in Practice Survey

Respondents to the survey reflected on country experiences to date, suggesting lessons and advice on how to make synergies work in practice. Most of the seventy-nine respondents were government and civil society practitioners in the Global South, and provided grassroots perspectives on implementing local or community level initiatives that simultaneously address climate change, reduce poverty and facilitate recovery. Survey respondents, expanded on the webinar discussions, identifying concrete examples to illustrate the potential of synergistic and interlinked approaches, while also analysing gaps and challenges for maximizing impact.

Going forward

These consultations illuminated areas of progress in linking economic, SDG and climate objectives, pointing to specific academic, public policy, private sector and community initiatives. Participants agreed that the pandemic has only increased the urgency of acting on what we know, in order to more deliberately and systematically recognize and act on the connections between human and environmental health. There was broad agreement on the goal of going beyond responding to crises, and working together to build resilience to systemic risks, and to address climate change, biodiversity collapse and widening inequality.

All experts and practitioners from the consultations are committed to staying engaged – to help lead the charge to advance climate and SDG synergies – within and across their respective areas of work.



3 Ambitious and integrated approaches

are needed to maximize SDG and climate co-benefits in Covid-19 recovery strategies

The pandemic presents an opportunity to make connections between human and environmental health, and to go beyond responding to short-term crises by building resilience to interconnected risks, including climate change, biodiversity collapse, exclusion and widening inequality.

Participants in all three webinars underscored that recovery efforts can sustain environmentally positive shifts initiated by the pandemic, such as creating more bike lanes and switching away from coal, while also generating positive economic impacts. They emphasized the critical importance of aligning short-term responses with longer-term objectives through recovery measures that “front load” impacts for people and the economy.

Integration with existing agreements

At a minimum, Covid-19 recovery packages should be checked against countries’ Nationally Determined Contributions under the Paris Agreement, and their SDG commitments, to ensure that recovery efforts do not reverse progress. Updating and enhancing NDCs requires planning that can be used as a basis for of recovery plans; countries can incorporate inclusive growth and health co-benefits into their NDCs or otherwise integrate health, climate change and development planning.

Inclusive analysis

Many countries lack the capacity to conduct analysis of climate-SDG synergies, especially in an inclusive, transparent, and updatable way. Adaptable tools – rather than guidance or one-off projects – are best for building local capacity, especially when backed by long-term structural support and partnerships. However, greater capacity building is needed to facilitate inclusive analytical processes to provide policy makers with options, particularly as climate-SDG interactions depend heavily on local contexts. –The Stockholm Environment Institute, for example, brings together diverse actors to consider different solutions and to evaluate the potential effects of each solution on other policies.

To get incentives and policies right, it is important for data, analysis and reporting to capture the multiplier effects of NDC and recovery spending on intersecting objectives. Progress has already been seen on integrated plans and strategies, joint monitoring and reporting on common indicators, and shared data sets. This progress can be further supported by strengthening governance mechanisms, regulations, capacities and innovative financing instruments, particularly for the least developed countries and small island developing states. The goal is to integrate climate action and disaster risk reduction into

policies, programmes and budgets across all sectors of sustainable development.

Scaled-up solutions

Participants discussed a range of stimulus and recovery measures that can address the underlying causes of systemic risks, avoid trade-offs between socioeconomic and environmental priorities and harness climate and SDG synergies. They particularly emphasized the potential to scale up proven solutions – including by generating employment through labour-intensive green infrastructure, energy efficiency, ecosystem restoration and sustainable agriculture initiatives. Speakers illustrated the effectiveness of such measures, by sharing examples of initiatives that have worked in tandem to generate employment, raise incomes of vulnerable populations, strengthen social protections, build stronger and more equitable health systems, protect vital ecosystems and empower marginalized populations.

Coordinated financing

The public debt arising from the Covid-19 stimulus measures creates a serious risk of reducing the real or perceived fiscal space for public investment in many countries, particularly in the global South. Recognizing the severity of the pandemic's human crisis and the likelihood of an extended economic downturn, the speakers agreed that fiscal space should not be a binding constraint to recovery. They noted the need for collective action and innovative mechanisms to build fiscal space, and suggested that actors in all relevant fields unite in a coalition to demand that recovery spending be aligned with – rather than displacing – measures essential for a just, sustainable and resilient recovery.

Increased collaboration

Participants agreed to pursue climate and SDG synergies in their respective areas of work, while working to build and strengthen the cross-disciplinary, multi-stakeholder collaboration required to apply synergies in practice. Stepped up action and collaboration was deemed particularly important in order to: strengthen local capacities to analyse, monitor and build climate and SDG synergies in recovery plans; advocate for recovery spending aligned with measures essential to SDG and Paris climate commitments; focus the efforts of diverse

actors on key opportunities to recover faster, better and stronger from the Covid-19 pandemic; and share examples and evidence of synergies in practice, including in the context of intergovernmental processes.

Member States and other stakeholders should drive synergies by forming transformational partnerships. In dealing with the pandemic, strong political commitments by governments and multilateral cooperation will be more crucial than ever for enhancing synergies. Multi-stakeholder initiatives play a central role in accelerating action. UN entities, international organizations, and multilateral development banks, as well as businesses, civil society and other stakeholders, must step up and strengthen their efforts to support the implementation of the SDGs and climate action.

Engagement in international processes

Key intergovernmental platforms in 2021 should be leveraged to enhance synergies to help achieve the goals of the 2030 Agenda and the Paris Agreement, including the UN's High-level Political Forum, the High-Level Dialogue on Energy, the Global Sustainable Transport Conference, the UN Ocean Conference, the Biodiversity Summit, the Food Systems Summit, the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change Conference of Parties, the Fifth UN Conference on the LDCs, and the Assembly of the International Renewable Energy Agency.



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Aligning implementation of the SDGs

with the Paris Agreement and Covid-19 recovery: Macro and sectoral perspectives

Participants with expertise on renewable energy, employment, food systems, biodiversity, oceans and transport proposed specific ways to leverage intergovernmental processes to help drive a synergistic recovery to the Covid-19 pandemic. They suggested targets, tools, and examples of climate and SDG multipliers that – carried forward – can help to enable and motivate intentional, coordinated efforts to maximize climate and SDG co-benefits.

A green recovery based on sustainable energy

The Covid-19 pandemic could either widen existing sustainable energy access gaps or instead accelerate progress towards achieving SDG 7 and the Paris Agreement, depending on the priorities of national recovery efforts. Successful stimulus and recovery packages call for policy cohesion, and systemic changes going forward.

Policy responses will be key in determining whether the crisis represents a setback for efforts to bring about a more secure and sustainable energy system, or a catalyst that accelerates the pace of change. Integrating SDG targets and sustainable energy solutions into Covid-19 responses and recovery policies and strategies will help economies become greener and more resilient. Enhanced NDCs can

also be used as a framework for green investments in economic recovery packages that save lives and improve health conditions while also addressing the climate crisis.

Suggested energy-related measures to recover better and stronger from the Covid-19 crisis, improve long-term health and living conditions, and avert climate disasters included:

- (a) phasing out fossil fuel subsidies and coal use;
- (b) using economic recovery packages to create jobs by invest in expanded energy access through sustainable energy solutions, renewables, energy efficiency, and modern energy services (both grid-based and off-grid);
- (c) prioritizing clean cooking solutions;
- (d) adopting just transition strategies, supporting vulnerable groups, and promoting a more gender-equal response and recovery;
- (e) creating enabling environments for sustainable energy investments; and
- (f) encouraging innovation, and a transition from energy-intensive lifestyles to more sustainable patterns.

Effective climate action will require annual energy-related CO₂ emissions to decline by 70% below today's levels by 2050. The total share of renewable energy needs to increase from around 14% of total primary energy supply in

2017 to around 28% in 2030 and 65% in 2050. Cumulative energy sector investments need to rise to US \$49 trillion between now and 2030. Under a Transforming Energy pathway proposed by the International Renewable Energy Agency (IRENA), the energy sector could employ almost 100 million people in 2030 – 15 million more than under a business-as-usual scenario. By 2030, global GDP and welfare gains would increase by 2% and 6.9% respectively compared to business as usual and create 3.7 million green jobs in the first 3 years.

Short-term actions for a long-term resilient and sustainable economy include: safeguarding existing renewable energy projects; introducing immediate renewable energy and energy efficiency deployment measures; strengthening social and labour policies; leveraging local capabilities; mobilizing innovative financing tools for green investments; and supporting vulnerable energy consumers and enterprises.

Fostering a sustainable recovery with more and better jobs

The Covid-19 pandemic exposed the multiple links between public health and the environment and made it evident that healthy lives and workplaces, and productive economies, depend on a healthy environment.

The global lockdown measures, and resulting economic downturn, led to improvements in air quality and emissions reductions. However, we must engage actively to correct what could be a false public perception and negative message, i.e., that the natural corollary of improving environmental conditions is economic and social damage on the scale experienced today. That perception could lead people to draw the wrong conclusions about what a 'green' transformation requires.

It is not necessary to choose between public health and safety, environmental sustainability and vibrant economic activity, jobs and incomes. But taking a just transition perspective in fostering a green and sustainable recovery is essential.

Fostering innovation, entrepreneurship and decent work in ITC-based solutions, telemedicine, urban farming, and sustainable mobility could help provide a way forward.

In many low-income countries, several prototypes of touch-less hand washing systems were produced using recycled and/or reused materials from carpenters and welders. The REMA Medical technologies platform, based in Benin, allowed more than 5000 African medical doctors from more than 20 countries to exchange information and data in real time and to develop a community of practice. In Ghana, a start-up is using drones to deliver medicines, blood and medical materials to health centres located in rural area, avoiding traditional road-based transportation.

Nature-based solutions

Nature-based solutions are well-positioned to drive economic, social and environmental recovery.

Immediate employment gains (1-12 months) can come from daily wage jobs or public works activities involving ecosystem-appropriate restoration, reforestation, non-timber forest produce, removal of invasive species, and nursery maintenance.

Somewhat longer-term job creation wins (1-5 years) can be achieved by building and strengthening market linkages and supply chains, especially for micro, small and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs) and supporting smallholder farmers in adopting climate resilient agricultural practices.

Long-term benefits (5+ years) along these lines can be found through shifts in current policies and institutions towards promoting a low-carbon economy while also addressing co-vulnerabilities of social and planetary health and improving social protections. Macroeconomic policies must also be designed to be more resilient to future shocks, including natural disasters and climate change, as well as pandemics.

Experiences from Paraguay show that low-interest, long-term and flexible credits were useful as incentives for grain-producing farmers and cattle ranchers to move away from business-as-usual production and land-use conversion practices and make a switch to forest-friendly, low-carbon, and climate-resilient activities.

Similarly, low-interest loans and other financial incentives can be helpful for encouraging unemployed labourers from cities to return to rural farming, and for promoting innovative productive practices – especially ones that

increase the resilience of productive systems to climate vulnerability and carbon sequestration, and reduce greenhouse gas emissions through avoided deforestation. For this to work, central, development and commercial banks will need the power to blend finance to structure flexible concessional finance.

It is also important to ensure that temporary work activities are linked to more long-term solutions for employment, and open doors to develop value-added activities. Clear methodologies are needed to identify demand and help shape sustainable products that are useable and marketable, so they can generate income for communities. Conditions tied to the delivery of government grants and loans can be important tools for creating markets for sustainable products.

Market dynamics tend to be different in every country and for every service or commodity. The UNDP Green Commodities Programme has a great deal of experience linking market dynamics with commodities production. Production plans must offer a combination of quick wins and long-term market linkage strategies, underpinned by a specific set of tools and methodologies to support the materialization of the idea. The ultimate goal should be to identify interventions that will improve quality and better bargaining conditions, as well as information sharing.

Biodiversity conservation

Protection of the world's biodiversity is central to overcoming other global challenges, including recovery from the pandemic and prevention of future pandemics. The Post-2020 biodiversity framework is currently being negotiated and is scheduled for adoption at the Conference of State Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity in May 2021.

The world is in a biodiversity crisis, with record declines in species caused by complex social and economic factors. However, the current crisis is solvable with systemic and overarching change. One crucial element is for decision makers to incorporate prevention of biodiversity loss whenever they are calculating trade-offs and making decisions across sectors.

Many of the actions needed to stem biodiversity loss lie outside the direct mandate of the Convention on Biological

Diversity. Therefore, it is very important to negotiate an ambitious new global biodiversity framework that creates synergies with other global frameworks. The Covid-19 pandemic is a wake-up call for the world to pay attention to biodiversity, including the spread of zoonotic disease and spill-overs from antibiotic-laden livestock.

Conservation should not be seen as an additional burden on finances, but rather a solution that can bring about economic benefits, generate jobs, deliver clean water, prevent disasters, combat air pollution and tackle climate change. Conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity, together with ecosystem restoration, could deliver one-third of the emissions reductions required under the Paris Agreement. (The land use sector is responsible for around a quarter of global greenhouse gas emissions and is a key driver of global biodiversity loss.)

Climate actions under the Paris Agreement, particularly nature-based solutions, should be designed to avoid negative impacts on biodiversity, such as encouraging mono-culture agriculture. This requires communication between biodiversity and climate experts, and other communities.

Experts and practitioners from all sectors are invited to engage in the current negotiation of the biodiversity framework, and to embed connections to other sectors, the SDGs and the Paris Agreement. The framework will establish goals for 2050, and targets for 2030, addressing direct and indirect drivers of biodiversity loss, as well as enabling environmental review mechanisms.

Updated NDCs should integrate climate and biodiversity targets, as Chile has done by linking ocean protection with climate action. Targets to establish a price on carbon are critical, along with pricing mechanisms for ecosystem and environmental services.

There are many win-win policies that can benefit both biodiversity and the climate, and now with the impacts of Covid-19, solutions and examples need to be put forward to that also demonstrate the potential for co-benefits for health, safety and economic recovery. Generating jobs that involve planting trees and retrofitting buildings can potentially advance many objectives. Pakistan has, for example, incorporated tree planting for unemployed persons in its recovery package.

Synergies and trade-offs exist not only between policy objectives, but also between different places and stakeholders. So, for example, tree planting in one area may have positive – or negative – impacts on a neighbouring district or population. Governments must consider impacts accordingly.

Steps that governments can take to advance coherence:

Align strategies related to climate, forestry, agriculture, biodiversity, land use, economic growth, health and the SDGs.. Developing integrated strategies requires consultation and coordination across ministries and stakeholders. It also helps to establish 'SMART Targets' – ones that are specific, measurable, achievable, realistic, and time-bound.

Establish cross-cutting institutions, led from the top of the government, to facilitate horizontal and vertical coherence. To be successful, the mandates of institutions must match their authority and access to funding. For example, establishing an agency for preserving peat lands will be ineffective withing adequate financing and authority.

Ensure coherence between policies. Governments can, for example, reassess and reform environmentally harmful subsidies, in view of preserving the contributions of natural ecosystem services and preventing harmful health impacts. Establishing clear land tenure is another key policy with win-win co-benefits for biodiversity, climate, and SDGs related to health and employment. The lack of clear land tenure makes land degradation more likely, negatively impacts food production, and complicates efforts to incentivize conservation.

Managing oceans

Ecosystem impacts and resources

Oceans are being severely impacted by increased greenhouse gas emissions from human activities. Changes in water temperature, ocean acidification and deoxygenation are leading to variations in oceanic circulation and chemistry, rising sea levels, and increased storm intensity, as well as changes in the diversity and abundance of marine species.

Degradation of coastal and marine ecosystems is threatening the physical, economic and food security of local communities, as well as resources for global businesses. Climate change weakens the ability of the ocean and coasts to provide critical ecosystem services such as food supplies, carbon storage, oxygen generation, as well as their ability to support nature-based solutions to climate change adaptation.

Sustainable management, conservation and restoration of coastal and marine ecosystems are vital to support the continued provision of ecosystem services on which people depend. A low-carbon emissions trajectory is indispensable for preserving the health of the ocean. At the same time, protecting the world's oceans can impact positively on climate action and other sustainable development goals, such as efforts to reduce poverty and disease.

A recent survey of 10 ocean networks found that the Covid-19 pandemic lockdown caused a huge reduction in our ability to perform ocean observations. Ocean research is also at risk due to disinvestment. Observation and research are critical for many reasons, including for monitoring the ocean's ability to continue to operate as a sink for carbon emissions. Oceans absorb about one-third of global carbon emissions.

There is also a critical link between ocean health and human health. The acidification of oceans, due to climate change, impacts human health via a reduction in the quantity and quality of food, and increased chemical contamination and natural toxins. The loss of ocean biodiversity also reduces a potential source of medical resources. In addition, livelihoods, such as fishing, are impacted negatively, and for some people, mental health is affected by the reduction of nature-based recreation.

Shipping

Ocean shipping is responsible for just over 2% of global greenhouse gas emissions (and about 80% of global trade). These emissions were not included in the Paris Agreement, but the International Maritime Organization (IMO) is working to align the industry with the global climate agreement. Innovative ship design and alternative fuels are both critical for the transition to low or zero-carbon shipping.

The economic disruption due to the Covid-19 pandemic could provide an opportunity to speed up the transition to renewable fuels and invest in the infrastructure required. To this end IMO is bringing together private and public sector actors and encouraging research and development.

IMO negotiations on regulatory measures are not currently on track for a proportionate response to climate change in keeping with the Paris Agreement. The current target for shipping emissions, as agreed in 2020, would lead to an increase in greenhouse gas emissions by 2030. With adequate pressure, there is an opportunity to get on track. The agreement will be revised in 2023, with renewed negotiations starting in 2021. Ongoing technical discussions can also arrive at a policy option that effectively increases the emissions reduction target.

Shipping will need to move rapidly away from fossil fuels to reach zero-emission ships by 2030. The best alternative fuels will depend on the purchaser and location, but biofuels and renewable feedstocks are key sources. The transition to zero-carbon shipping depends on the wider economy and how countries decide to use such feedstocks. Some Covid-19 recovery packages have helpfully invested in low-carbon hydrogen.

Co-benefits: Transitions to biofuels and hydrogen feedstocks can enable a low-carbon shift not just in shipping but across the transport sector, reducing dependence on imports. Constructing infrastructure for renewable energy in shipping ports, for example, can help to drive a wider transition. Developing countries may be able to leapfrog straight into zero-emissions shipping, bypassing expensive and high-carbon liquid natural gas. Investments in biofuel and hydrogen supply chains will generate employment.

Risks: Employment losses could result from the transition in fuel sources. In addition, a transition that does not adequately support the shipping needs and decarbonization of low-income countries may lead to increases in the costs of shipping and trade, leading to a reduction in the competitiveness of developing countries and potentially higher import costs.

The UN Oceans Conference will take place in Lisbon in 2021. Private sector representatives and governments can come forward with commitments and initiatives aimed at the shipping industry and wider oceans agenda. Non-governmental institutions, such as the Global Maritime

Forum will also be involved.

Food systems

The Covid-19 pandemic has both demonstrated and aggravated the vulnerabilities and flaws in our global food system. Over 2 billion people, or one in every three people, suffer from one or more forms of malnutrition. At the same time, the food system is responsible for around one-third of global greenhouse emissions, as well as land and water pollution and declines in biodiversity.

There is an obvious opportunity to both improve people's lives and protect the planet through healthy and sustainable diets. Following the World Health Organization's healthy diet guidelines, for example, could reduce mortality worldwide by 6 to 10% , and reduce greenhouse emissions by 29 to 70%.

Changes in the food system can happen quickly, particularly when people change what they choose to consume. They may have made some bad decisions during the pandemic, such as hoarding, but also good decisions, such as buying products with shorter supply lines, including local produce. Messages to encourage good decisions can sometimes help bring about change quickly.

Covid-19 has made some people more aware of the enabling system behind the food that they consume. This represents an opportunity to change policy, and to encourage short supply lines, and healthy and sustainable food consumption. Governments and scientists can support the transition with locally specific guidelines that include sustainability criteria. Such guidelines can inform regulators about what to tax and subsidize, producers about what to produce and consumers about what to consume. Changing behaviour requires locally adapted and championed guidelines that, for many, will mean a shift to a more plant-based diet.

At the global level, the UN Committee on World Food Security is developing guidelines for food systems and nutrition. These should be ambitious and reflect what is truly needed. At the UN Secretary-General's Food Systems Summit in 2021, concrete steps can then be put forward and adopted to support the implementation of the guidelines being developed for World Food Security.

In the context of the Food Summit, it is critical to consider

all the various challenges and opportunities related to the food trade, including supply chains, waste, rural development, vulnerable communities and gender roles. Concrete measures are needed to increase coherence and synergies for implementation, among agencies and sectors in governments, businesses and communities.

Worldwide, 690 million people are hungry every day while 2 billion people are obese or overweight. Transformation of the food system will require the application of technologies to increase agriculture efficiency and yields, while also preserving natural resources, empowering women and enabling smallholder farmers to access markets.

The Food Summit can send a strong message about the centrality of the world's food systems to both the 2030 Agenda and the Paris Agreement. Neither can be achieved without leadership to transform food systems that unites scientists, farmers, industry, migrant workers and governments. The Food Summit must make it clear that transformation is possible, but only if everyone is engaged and allowed to build their own sustainable food systems. Dignity and human rights are thus important themes.

Synergies and the European Green Deal

The European Green Deal is a new growth strategy that aims to transform the EU into a fair and prosperous society, with a modern, resource-efficient and competitive economy. Its goals include no net emissions of greenhouse gases in 2050, and economic growth decoupled from resource use.

It also aims to protect, conserve and enhance the EU's natural capital, and protect the health and well-being of citizens from environment-related risks and impacts. At the same time, this transition must be just and inclusive.

The EU has the collective ability to transform its economy and society to put it on a more sustainable path. It can build on its strengths as a global leader on climate and environmental measures, consumer protection, and workers' rights.

However, delivering additional reductions in emissions is a challenge. It will require massive public investment and increased efforts to direct private capital towards climate and environmental action, while avoiding lock-in into

unsustainable practices. The EU must be at the forefront of coordinating international efforts towards building a coherent financial system that supports sustainable solutions. This upfront investment is also an opportunity to put Europe firmly on a new path of sustainable and inclusive growth. The European Green Deal will accelerate and underpin the transition needed in all sectors.

The Green Deal is an integral part of the Commission's strategy to implement the 2030 Agenda and the sustainable development goals. As part of the Green Deal, the Commission will refocus the European Semester process of macroeconomic coordination to integrate the SDGs, to put sustainability and the well-being of citizens at the centre of economic policy, and to ensure that the SDGs are at the heart of the EU's policymaking and action.

The European Green Deal sets out to increase the EU's climate ambition for 2030 and 2050, by leveraging synergies across all sectors: supplying clean, affordable and secure energy, mobilizing industry for a clean and circular economy, building and renovating in an energy-efficient and resource-efficient way, accelerating the shift to sustainable and smart mobility, designing a fair, healthy and environmentally-friendly food system, preserving and restoring ecosystems and biodiversity, setting a zero pollution ambition for a toxic-free environment, pursuing green finance and investment, ensuring a just transition, greening national budgets, sending the right price signals, and mobilizing research and fostering innovation.



5

Conclusions

Maximizing synergies and minimizing trade-offs between agendas

Some of the types of public investment, private sector initiatives, collective action and inclusive growth required to achieve the SDGs and the Paris Agreement can also help ensure a rapid, sustained and equitable recovery from the Covid-19 pandemic – particularly those that scale up existing programmes supporting health and essential social services, and ones that boost employment opportunities related to sustainable local food production, healthy ecosystems, renewable energy and green infrastructure.

It is thus imperative to link agendas to support public health, economic stimulus, climate action and sustainable development.

Given the current health and economic crises, and the increasingly ambitious actions that will be needed by governments to reduce their countries' GHG emissions and adapt to climate change, climate action must increasingly take into account social and economic impacts, both negative and positive.

Economic development strategies and investment plans must also take into account climate considerations, including impacts on GHG emissions and implications for climate change adaptation. As countries build or renovate the infrastructure needed to sustain inclusive social and economic progress throughout this century, no country

can afford to ignore how infrastructure investments will impact climate change mitigation and adaptation.

The ever-tighter interdependencies between climate actions, public health, and development plans and policies suggest that governments should consider what adjustments they could make to planning and policymaking processes such that they facilitate the realization of synergies and minimization of trade-offs. Adjustments may include changes to institutional arrangements; for example, changes to lines of responsibility and requirements for collaboration among relevant government offices, ministries and agencies.

To enhance the coordination and coherence of planning and policymaking processes, governments should identify where the benefits of more closely aligning the agendas are likely to be the greatest in number and scope and quantify, as far as possible, the co-benefits of climate policies for health and safety and other sustainable development objectives, and conversely the co-benefits of other sustainable development policies for climate change mitigation and/or adaptation.

Insofar as governments succeed in capturing synergies from more closely aligning climate action and the SDGs, doing so should augment the public benefits from

government policy efforts and investments. Higher social returns on investment yielding both climate and non-climate benefits not only should serve to attract additional public financial support, but also, where private returns from such investments are also high, may serve to attract additional private finance.

There may be economies in resources and efforts to be realized from more closely aligning the monitoring and reporting of progress on the climate change and SDG agendas, although they will no doubt have distinct features and processes given the especially critical role of transparency and accountability under the Paris Agreement. As the implementation of these agendas is increasingly coordinated, if not fully integrated, at the national level, it makes perfect sense to find ways of streamlining the monitoring and reporting of progress in achieving both the goals of the Paris Agreement and the SDGs. One positive spillover from the Paris Agreement to the SDGs could be a more rigorous review of SDG progress and systematic follow-up to support accelerated implementation of the 2030 Agenda.



Annex 1

Concept Note for the Webinars

Introduction - the world in 2020

The Covid-19 pandemic is a crisis for humanity. Travel restrictions and social distancing, adopted to stem the spread of the novel corona virus, have shuttered much economic activity. Even as rates of transmission fall in certain countries and cities, others report rising trends, total numbers of deaths continue to increase, unemployment is soaring, billions of livelihoods are in jeopardy and a global economic recession is imminent. Continuing anxiety and uncertainty cloud prospects for the future.

At the same time, many governments are rolling out stimulus packages on a monumental scale and planning for recovery. There is a new appreciation of the urgent need to prepare for global crises. Millions are adapting to working and learning remotely. Against this backdrop of uncertainty and rapid change, the 2030 Agenda and the Paris Agreement can serve as a compass to help policy makers meet urgent needs while aligning short-term solutions to medium and long-term climate and sustainable development objectives.

Looking ahead

Even before Covid-19 upended plans, the year 2020 was meant to be a landmark year for climate action and the

SDGs. Following the SDG Summit in 2019, the United Nations launched a 'Decade of Action and Delivery' to accelerate progress towards the SDGs, while governments prepared to submit updated Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs), enhancing their climate ambitions under the Paris Agreement.

The pandemic re-emphasizes the absolute necessity of continuing to harness synergies across both SDG implementation and climate action. Global temperatures continue to rise: the world is now 1.10C warmer than pre-industrial levels, perilously close to breaching the 1.50C aspiration. SDG progress was already insufficient across multiple goals and targets – new projections are even gloomier, estimating increases in hunger and poverty.

As countries chart their way out of the crisis, their first priority will be restoring the well-being of their people - anchoring plans to make the most of the synergies between SDGs and climate can produce immediate benefits, as well as accelerating the transition to sustainable, de-carbonized economies and resilient, inclusive societies. Not doing so, on the other hand, risks locking economies and societies back into unsustainable pathways.

Stimulus packages and recovery plans that emphasize investments in social protection, public services, and low-

carbon energy, food and transport systems can deliver both immediate and long-term social, economic and environmental co-benefits. They can foster job creation in care work and other low-carbon sectors, help achieve the SDGs and put the world on a climate-safe path. Private sector and multilateral financial institutions can incorporate climate action in their investment plans directing resources towards clean power, battery storage, and carbon capture technology. Poorer countries can be supported to leap-frog away from traditional 'grow-first-clean-up-later' pathways. Working in concert, governments can pave the way for a more sustainable financing of global public goods, including pandemic prevention and climate/disaster resilience.

Such changes will need to counter pressures to return to 'business-as-usual', but the pandemic itself is promoting greater awareness of the deep interlinkages across sectors and countries, and between humans and nature. Changes in individual behavior and consumption patterns, along with greater feelings of solidarity and inter-generational awareness can support the necessary transitions. Stakeholders from different domains – including experts, practitioners, policy makers, scientists, businesses, young people – can play a critical role, working in collaboration to bring these perspectives to bear in helping countries and communities recover better and stronger from the pandemic.

Global synergies conferences

In April 2019, UN DESA and UN Climate Change (UNFCCC secretariat), organized the first annual Global Conference on Strengthening Synergies between the Paris Agreement and 2030 Agenda. Hosted by the Government of Denmark, it took place in Copenhagen with several hundred participants from diverse communities.

The success of the first conference, including its follow up during COP 25 in Madrid, led to a decision to make this an annual event. The pandemic, however, forced a change in plans for 2020. Rather than an in-person conference, a virtual Global Synergies Consultation will take place over the course of May and June. The objective, however, remains the same, but is marked with greater urgency.

We seek to advance the application of synergies in practice by illustrating the potential of synergistic approaches to recover better and faster from Covid-19, accelerate enhanced climate action and transition to sustainable

development. In the words of the UN Secretary-General, the "recovery must not come on the backs of the poorest – and we cannot create a legion of new poor. Working in concert, countries can draw on synergies to steer recovery to a more sustainable and inclusive path. The Paris Agreement and 2030 Agenda give us a framework that can drive global recovery and enable us to keep our promises to people and planet." All stakeholders and partners are invited to join.

Objectives of the 2020 Synergies Consultations

- Take stock of advances in knowledge and practice in implementing synergies at all levels;
- Explore how to maximize SDG and climate co-benefits in Covid-19 recovery measures;
- Identify concrete examples that illustrate the potential of synergistic approaches to recover better and stronger from Covid-19 and achieve 2030 Agenda and Paris Agreement objectives;
- Ascertain ways in which updated National Determined Contributions in 2021 can contribute to Covid-19 recovery and integrate SDG co-benefits;
- Contribute substantive inputs to benchmark global platforms such as the High-Level Political Forum for Sustainable Development (HLPF), the SDG Decade of Action and UNFCCC/COPs.

Outcomes

1. An action-focused final Report to serve as input for the 2020 High-Level Political Forum, the SDG Decade of Action, UNFCCC/COP26 and other global fora;
2. A Compilation of Synergies in Action drawn from case studies and initiatives;
3. Continued virtual exchange and engagement among the synergies community, including to support multi-disciplinary approaches to recovery from the Covid-19 pandemic.

Participation

Technical experts from governments and international organizations; businesses; academia and other stakeholders covering a variety of SDGs and climate action.

Schedule of Engagements

Questionnaire on Synergies in Action¹ - All stakeholders invited to contribute their perspectives, initiatives and experiences, applying synergies in practice.

Thurs 28 May, 8:30 -11:00AM (NY time) – Webinar 1 of 3, Thinking Ahead for a Sustainable, Just and Resilient Recovery

Thurs 11 June, 10-Noon (NY) – Webinar 2 of 3, Synergies for Just Transitions and Economic Recovery

Thurs, 25 June, 9-11AM (NY) – Webinar 3 of 3, Going forward with Climate and SDG Synergies

7 - 17 July – UN High Level Political Forum

2021, Dates TBA: UN Climate Change Conference (UNFCCC COP 26)

Resources

UN Climate and SDGs Synergies Knowledge Platform - Synergies questionnaire and webinar resources: <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/climate-sdgs-synergies2019#home>

UN Global Sustainable Development Report 2019, “The Future is Now: Science for Achieving Sustainable Development”: https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/24797GSDR_report_2019.pdf

UN Report, “Shared Responsibility, Global Solidarity: Responding to the Socio-Economic Impacts of Covid-19”, Chart on p. 12 summarizes impacts on different SDGs <https://unsdg.un.org/resources/shared-responsibility-global-solidarity-responding-socio-economic-impacts-covid-19>

Report of the UN Secretary General on the 2019 Climate Action Summit and the Way Forward in 2020: https://www.un.org/en/climatechange/assets/pdf/cas_report_11_dec.pdf

1 Responses will form the basis for drafting the 2020 Global Synergies Consultations Report and Compilation of Synergies in Action, to serve as input to the HLPF, SDG Decade of Action, UNFCCC COP26 and other UN conferences.



Annex 2

Programmes of the webinars

Webinar 1 - Thinking ahead for a Sustainable, Just and Resilient Recovery

Thursday, 28 May 2020 9:00 am - 11:30 am EST

Welcome Remarks by Alexander Trepelkov, UN DESA

Opening Remarks: Mr. Liu Zhenmin, UN Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs
Ms. Patricia Espinosa, UNFCCC Executive Secretary

Panel 1: Planning for Synergies

Moderated by Zitouni Oulddada, Deputy Director, Climate and Environment Division – CBC, Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO)

Speakers:

- Thibaud Voita, Head of Knowledge Products, NDC Partnership
- Henning Wuester, Director, ICAT Integrated Planning
- Jason W. Veysey, Deputy Director, Stockholm Environment Institute
- Ivonne Lobos Alva, Stockholm Environment Institute Research Fellow, Representative of HLPF Major Groups and other Stakeholders

- Sandee Recabar, Planning Officer and Division Chief, Implementation Oversight Division, Philippines Climate Change Commission

Panel 2: Monitoring Synergies for Transparent and Accountable Covid-19 Recovery

Speakers:

- Karen Holm Olsen, Senior Researcher, Impact Assessment and Adaptation Analysis, UNEP/DTU
- Junichi Fujino, Principal Researcher and Senior Coordinator for Urban Taskforce, IGES
- Felipe De Leon, Ministry of Environment and Energy, Costa Rica

Webinar 2: Synergies for Just Transitions and Economic Recovery

Introduction by

David Koranyi, Policy Advisor on Sustainable Energy, UN DESA
Livia Hollins, Programme Officer UN Climate Change Secretariat

Panel: Levers of Economic Recovery and a Just Transition to Sustainable Development

Moderated by Leena Srivastava, Deputy Director General for Science, IIASA

Speakers:

- Rabia Ferroukhi, IRENA Director of Knowledge, Policy and Finance
- Yvon Slingenberg, Director of the European Commission's Department for Climate
- Jesus Felipe, Senior Economic Advisor, Asian Development Bank
- Kamal Gueye, ILO Coordinator of the Green Jobs Programme
- Pradeep Kurukulasuriya, UNDP Director of Global Environmental Finance
- Janene Natasha Yazzie, International Indian Treaty Council, UN MGoS
- David Waskow, WRI Director of International Climate Action
- Enhancing NDCs: A Guide to Strengthening National Climate Plans
- Sheila Oparaocha, President, ENERGIA
- Maaïke de Langen, Pathfinders for Justice, NYU Center on International Cooperation

Webinar 3: Going Forward with Climate and SDG Synergies for Covid-19 Recovery

Thursday, 25 June 2020 9:00 am - 11:00 am EST

Introduction: Shantanu Mukherjee, UN DESA Chief, Integrated Policy Analysis Branch

Daniele Violetti, UNFCCC Director, Means of Implementation

Panel 1: Advancing Synergies on Key 2020 Themes

Moderated by Shantanu Mukherjee, Chief, Policy and Analysis Branch at Division for Sustainable Development, UN DESA

Speakers:

- Jane Ellis, OECD Principal Analyst on Climate Change
- Neil Pratt, Senior Officer Convention on Biological Diversity Secretariat
- Roel Hoenders, IMO Head of Air Pollution and Energy

Efficiency

- Tristan Smith, Associate Professor UCL, Director UMAS, Getting to Zero Coalition Bio
- Salvatore Arico, Head of Ocean Science Section, IOC-UNESCO Visit
- Stineke Oenema, Coordinator, UN Standing Committee on Nutrition
- Zitouni Ould-Dada, FAO Deputy Director Climate and the Environment FAO Visit

Panel 2: Acting on Climate and SDG synergies from the HLPF through COP26

Moderated by Minoru Takada, Energy Team Leader, UN DESA

Speakers:

- Kazuhiko Takeuchi, President, Institute for Global Environmental Strategies (IGES)
- Mwanahamisi Singano, Head of Programmes, African Women's Development and Communication Network, Representative of UN Major Groups and Other Stakeholders
- Stefano Signore, Head of Energy and Climate, EC DEVCO
- Sarah Renner, Consultant, UNDESA