



HIGH-LEVEL POLITICAL FORUM
ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

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A Global Expert Group Meeting in preparation for HLPF 2024:

Reinforcing the 2030 Agenda and eradicating poverty in times of multiple crises: the effective delivery of sustainable, resilient and innovative solutions

Hybrid, 4 – 5 March 2024, Tokyo

Meeting Summary for Session on SDG 13¹

Introduction

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. As the Secretary-General has stated “*Climate action is the 21st century’s greatest opportunity to drive forward all the Sustainable Development Goals.*”

While there is some progress and action on climate change and sustainable development, the world is offtrack on achieving both the SDGs and the Paris goals. The urgency of action is highlighted by both the Sustainable Development Goals Report 2023: Special Edition and the recent Sixth Assessment Report of the International Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), warning the world community to change course immediately in order to get on the right track. Profound economic, social, and environmental transitions are needed to overcome the interconnected crises of poverty and hunger, biodiversity loss, and climate change, among others. The UNFCCC COP28 Global Stocktake outcome paves the way for actionable steps forward on climate action and emphasizes the importance of synergy and integrated solutions by highlighting “the urgent need to address, in a comprehensive and synergetic manner, the interlinked global crises of climate change and biodiversity loss in the broader context of achieving the Sustainable Development Goals, as well as the vital importance of protecting, conserving, restoring and sustainably using nature and ecosystems for effective and sustainable climate action”.

The 2024 HLPF will be organized around the theme “Reinforce the 2030 Agenda and eradicate poverty in times of multiple crises: the effective delivery of sustainable, resilient, and innovative solutions.” The HLPF will conduct an in-depth review of SDGs 13 (climate action), as well as SDG 1 (End poverty), SDG 2 (Zero hunger), SDG 16 (Peaceful and inclusive societies), and SDG 17 (Means of implementation and Global Partnership for Sustainable Development).

To support the HLPF review of SDG 13, the Division for Sustainable Development Goals (DSDG) of UN DESA convened together with the UNFCCC secretariat an Expert Group Meeting (EGM) on SDG 13. The meeting was co-organized with the United Nations University and hosted by the Ministry of the Environment of Japan with the support of the Institute for Global Environmental Strategies (IGES). The meeting brought together global

¹ The recommendations expressed in this report are a summary of the contributions made by experts in the meeting and do not necessarily reflect the views of the United Nations.

experts and stakeholders from the UN system, governments, the private sector, academia, and civil society, to review progress on commitments made on climate action and make recommendations on the way forward.

Stocktaking and challenges

Climate change is one of the greatest challenges of our time and its cascading impacts continue to worsen and affect all the other SDGs. The urgency of addressing gaps and underlying barriers to implement SDG 13 is paramount as we evaluate progress having past the midpoint on the 2030 Agenda. Despite increasing commitments to SDGs and climate action, none of the SDG 13 targets are on track, with a drop-back observed in some of them. After a brief drop in emissions during the COVID-19 pandemic, global emissions shockingly continue to rise, highlighting the critical need for accelerated action and transformative change.

Climate change impacts over 3 billion people, with extreme weather events exacerbating famines, inequalities, and health issues. Regional progress varies, with Sub-Saharan Africa and Asia experiencing the most significant impacts of climate change due to issues including population growth, energy demands, fossil fuel dependency and climate-related loss and damage, amplifying inequalities.

The IPCC's latest report warns that global temperatures have surpassed 1.1°C, and current climate pledges fall short of the necessary reductions to limit warming to 1.5°C. At the same time the climate pledges under the Paris Agreement are insufficient, with an anticipated 0.3% reduction in emissions by 2030 compared to 2019 levels, a far cry from the necessary 42% cut to preserve the 1.5°C target, risking a potential warming of 2.5-2.9°C by the century's end. Rising sea levels pose a severe threat, particularly to coastal communities. Education on climate change remains lacking, with gaps in curricula and teacher capabilities. Disaster risk reduction efforts have made progress, but vulnerable regions still experience significantly higher mortality rates.

On the financial commitments, this year at COP29 a successful outcome will depend on setting a new goal on climate finance. The scale of finance needed is significant – global models from the most authoritative institutions all converge in the range of trillions annually. The first [Needs Determination Report](#) of the Standing Committee on Finance in 2021 shows nearly USD 6 trillion is needed to implement developing countries' climate action plans by 2030, and this does not fully account for the cost for adaptation.

Least Developed Countries and Small Island Developing States face unique challenges and urgently require capacity building, particularly for women, youth, and marginalized communities. Addressing these issues requires immediate and collaborative action across sectors and regions to mitigate the impacts of climate change and achieve the sustainable development goals.

Key messages

The following provides a summary of the key issues raised at the EGM, and insightful recommendations by over 70 experts from academia, government, international organizations, the private sector, and civil society towards accelerating SDG 13.

Multiple crises and recovery

1. SDG 13 is inextricably intertwined with the other SDGs, one cannot be achieved without the other, and pursuing win-win synergy solutions that tackle climate change and sustainable development together is the only way to correct our current course of action. Evidence demonstrates that climate action impacts 80 per cent of 2030 Agenda targets, presenting opportunities for impactful policies. Integrating climate action with other SDGs not only mitigates trade-offs but also provides the only viable solution to tackle interconnected crises, including climate change, biodiversity loss, inequalities, global mobility, conflicts, food and energy security, health, and global pandemics, while enhancing resilience. Some of the recommendations include:

- Emphasize the co-benefits of mitigation and adaptation climate policies and their impacts on socio-economic outcomes such as improved health, gender equality, reduced air pollution, lower agricultural emissions, cost-saving, and increased food, energy, and water security. Highlighting these benefits can help garner support for climate action and enhance wider development benefits.

- Recognize the interconnectedness of climate change, nature, biodiversity loss, forests, and land degradation. It is urgent to enhance synergy solutions that improve natural resource management practices. This approach aims to prevent the depletion of the remaining CO2 budget, mitigate environmental impacts, and protect nature and biodiversity.
- Enhance education, advocacy and communication efforts to widen understanding of climate change and its impacts across sectors and all levels of society. This includes integrating climate education into curricula, effectively disseminating information on climate issues, and raising awareness about the importance of policies and practices related to SDG 13 and its interconnected challenges.

Policies and actions to maximize synergies, mitigate trade-offs and drive transformation

2. Moving away from siloed approaches to integrated and coherent policies and actions that deliver climate and SDG co-benefits must be prioritized. Growing evidence indicates that identifying and leveraging synergies will result in co-benefits, and, in the majority of cases, they far outweigh trade-offs. Progress is being made in national and local efforts to align climate and development actions. This includes commitments, policies, and planning at various levels. However, there are still barriers to overcome for these policies to become more widespread and effective.

- Address barriers to enhance policy coherence and coordination across all levels of government and put in place effective and inclusive institutional and governance mechanisms to address policy interaction across sectors. Integrated plans and policies at the national level should translate vertically and horizontally.
- Tackling the challenge of fragmented evidence for integrated action on SDG 13 and other SDGs is essential. Recognizing the ongoing work of the Expert Group on Climate and SDG Synergies, and reinforcing the Science-Policy-Society interface is crucial for connecting scientific evidence with applied policy action.
- Enhance integration of SDG targets with national climate and environmental policies, including NDCs, NBSAPs, LT-LEDS, and VNRs, which can foster collaboration and cooperation on the ground. Connect science-policy-society practices by using science to inform policy and practice - leveraging reports from bodies like IPCC, IPBES, IRP, GSDR, improves integration and coherence of efforts across these various entities.

3. Just transition and leaving no one behind should be at the centre of SDG13 and integrated policy and programme planning and implementation. Climate action should prioritize the needs of marginalised, poor and vulnerable communities, as well as those who will be impacted the most by transformational pathways.

- Integrate just transition into national climate plans and development strategies, leveraging existing planning instruments and processes to ensure inclusive policies supporting impacted populations.
- Ensure that principles of equity, inclusiveness and leaving no one behind are built into global, national and local efforts for advancing climate-resilient and net-zero development pathways.
- Address existing inequalities by providing financial and technical support for just transitions, and prioritizing social equity and the empowerment of vulnerable groups in support measures and economic opportunities.
- Contextualize and localize solutions based on factors like geography, income levels, gender, and existing policy frameworks to address climate impacts and vulnerable communities' needs, ensuring gender-responsive measures.
- Put people at the centre of climate action and recognize climate change as a human rights issue, addressing impacts such as human mobility and climate justice concerns.

Means of implementation: Mechanisms and partnerships to accelerate progress

4. Deepening the evidence-base on integrated solutions is needed while leveraging existing scientific knowledge, new technologies and innovation on climate action and SDGs. Actions to accelerate SDG 13 must be underpinned by latest science analysis, technological solutions, and innovative approaches. While latest assessments such as the IPCC reports provide a clear policy path forward on what needs to be done

to achieve the Paris goals, there remains a gap in evidence on interlinkages and impacts of SDG 13 synergy solutions with the other SDGs.

- Furthering evidence on integrated solutions is key, showcasing best policies and practices for joint action on climate and SDGs at all levels. Reports from the Expert Group on Climate and SDG Synergy are valuable resources for this purpose.
- Policy entry points for synergistic action include incorporating nature-based solutions in national climate strategies, responding to COP28 Global Stocktake outcomes, developing sustainable transport systems, and investing in climate-resilient infrastructure.
- Quality data is essential for data-driven decision-making in climate action, emphasizing the need for both quality and quantity for effective risk management.
- Explore innovative tools such as AI that if aligned with planetary goals, can promote stability and stewardship for humanity's benefit.

5. Enhancing multi-stakeholder cooperation and dialogue at all levels is crucial for knowledge enhancement, addressing capacity gaps, and catalysing partnerships. All stakeholders play a role in transitioning to climate-resilient and net-zero future. Strengthening global, regional and local multi-stakeholder dialogue and cooperation is essential.

- Recognize that a whole of society and whole of government approach is needed to accelerate SDG13. Active engagement of line ministries as well as sub-national and local authorities in integrated planning and implementation is critical. Meaningful engagement of youth, civil society, academia, the private sector, and indigenous peoples is also vital.
- Facilitating global, regional and thematic exchanges of practice and initiatives on advancing SDG13 and its interlinkages through integrated approaches and synergistic action. Initiatives like the High Impact Initiatives of the SDG Summit showcase practical solutions, maintain momentum, and mobilize leadership and investment for scaling progress.
- Empowering cities to take a leading role in implementing SDG 13 and integrating climate action into their planning processes. This can help support progress on all SDGs by leveraging urban development's interconnected nature.
- Meaningfully engaging the young population through education, skills development, and data sharing, ensuring youth representation in national and international meetings, and holding governments accountable for reflecting youth voices in policies.

6. Prioritizing closing the financing gap to achieve SDG 13 and delivering SDG co-benefits, especially for those most affected by climate change, is crucial. Despite increased climate finance, significant investment gaps persist, rooted in global financial architecture failures and fragmentation. Scaling up action requires capacity to identify appropriate finance for each context, addressing SDG 13 interlinkages with biodiversity, forests, pollution, transport, energy, and gender to enhance effectiveness and reduce costs.

- Developed countries should fulfil their historical obligations by providing new, additional, adequate, and predictable climate finance to developing countries, addressing energy transition investment gaps, and climate-resilient infrastructure through well-designed public-private partnership.
- Reforms in international financial architecture are necessary to prioritize grant-based financing for adaptation, increase transparency in climate finance use, and explore financial mechanisms aligning with integrated climate and SDG approaches.
- Mobilizing both public and private finance is crucial for supporting climate mitigation and adaptation, particularly for adaptation, local communities and climate justice. Additionally, exploring market-based tools can mitigate perceived risks associated with funding emerging technologies in developing countries.

7. Strengthening political commitments within existing intergovernmental processes related to climate action and the SDGs is crucial. Clear political commitment and institutional leadership are needed to advance integrated approaches to achieving SDG 13 at all levels. Currently, limited interaction exists between intergovernmental processes on the SDGs, climate change, and other environmental issues. Recognizing the impact of integrated approaches and win-win synergies across these processes

underscores the importance of cross-sectoral policies promoting sustainable development and enabling commitments.

- Leveraging intergovernmental milestones such as UNFCCC COPs, CBD COPs, CCD COPs, IPCC, UNEA, HLPF and UNGA events, including the Summit of the Future, promotes integrated action on SDG 13 and sustainable development. The recent UNEA resolution on promoting synergies exemplifies integrated policy action in intergovernmental processes.
- Strengthening synergies between international agreements, such as the SDGs, the Paris Agreement, the global biodiversity framework, national disaster risk reduction plans, and the plastic pollution treaty, is crucial for accelerating progress on climate, biodiversity, and pollution goals.
- The binding nature of the Paris Agreement, including the outcomes of the first Global Stocktake, should be utilized to advance the implementation of other SDG targets that are interconnected with SDG 13 on climate action.