

Synergy Solutions for Climate and SDG Action: Bridging the Ambition Gap for the Future We Want

REPORT ON STRENGTHENING THE EVIDENCE BASE | SECOND EDITION 2024



Climate and SDG Synergy Expert Group

Composition: Independent group of 17 experts from diverse thematic and geographic backgrounds.

Objective: To prepare publication that builds on evidence-base and demonstrates win-win solutions of addressing climate and sustainable development challenges synergistically.

Learn more [here](#).



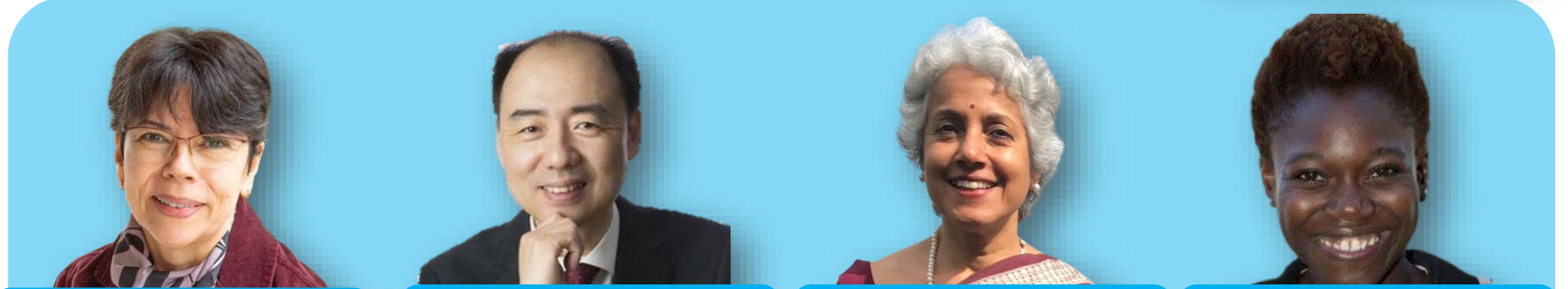
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2024 New Expert Group Members

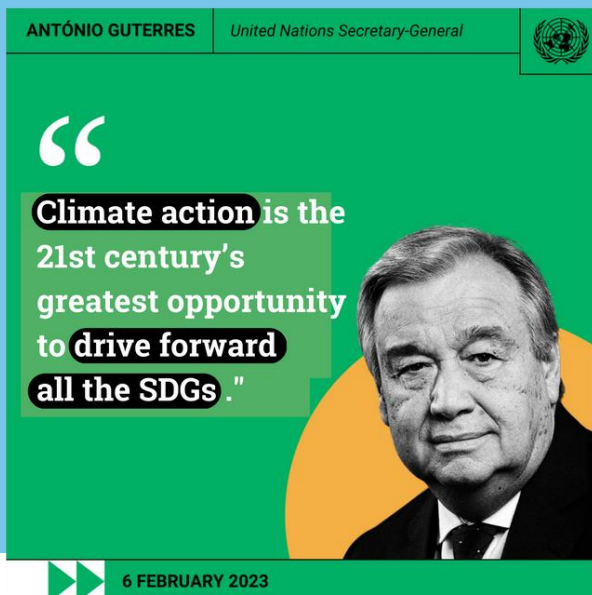


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Process towards the 2024 Global Report

UN SG's call for synergistic action

In his priorities for 2023, UN Secretary-General has called for an urgent course correction, urging world leaders to come together behind a rescue plan for people and planet — a rallying cry for synergistic action.



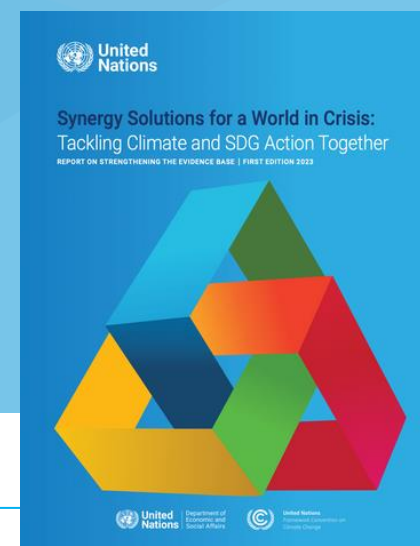
UNDESA and UNFCCC build a plan for action

The inter-agency partnership aimed at fostering synergistic action between the SDGs and climate agenda, and the outcomes of the fourth Global Conferences held since 2019 provide the essential platform, rationale, and urgency for this report.



2023 Global Report

This report emphasizes the need to integrate climate action and SDG to meet the UN Secretary-General's call for course correction, highlighting challenges and opportunities for enhancing these synergies. It provides data, expert insights, and recommendations for synergistic action across the 2030 Agenda and SDGs



SDGs and climate action are not on track

The GSDR 2024 report reveals that only 17 per cent of the SDG targets are currently on track, with nearly half showing minimal or moderate progress, and over one-third stalled or regressing. That year was also the warmest on record, with global temperatures nearing the critical 1.5°C threshold.



Expert Group prepares the second edition of the global report

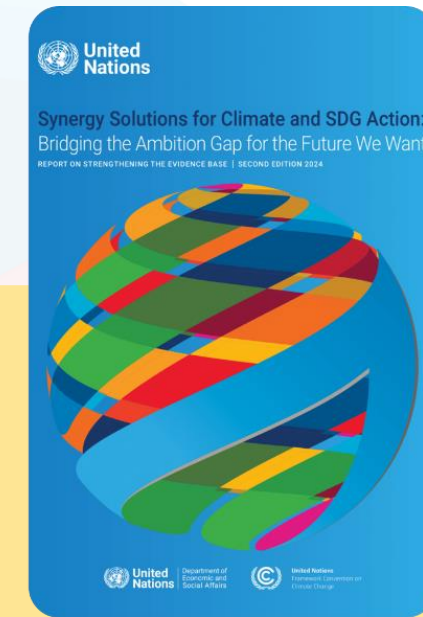
An international group of 17 experts was co-convened by UNDESA and UNFCCC to draft the first global report. It is the first collaborative effort to systematize knowledge on synergistic climate and SDG implementation, charting the course for accelerated action.



Key Elements of the 2024 Global Report

Synthesis Report

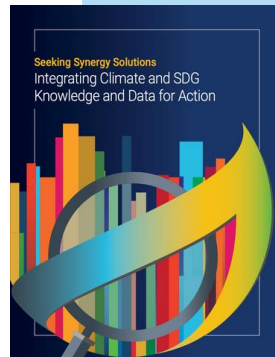
Providing conclusions and recommendations to be submitted to the political processes of 2024



Cross-cutting themes

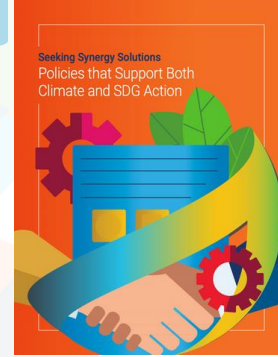
MEASURES FOR SYNERGISTIC ACTION – KNOWLEDGE AND DATA

Thematic Report



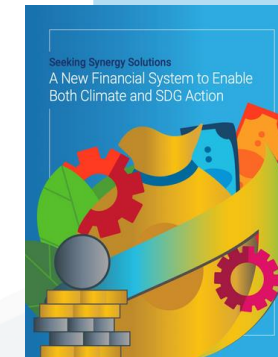
POLICY FRAMEWORK FOR SYNERGISTIC ACTION

Thematic Report



NEW FINANCIAL SYSTEM FOR SYNERGISTIC ACTION

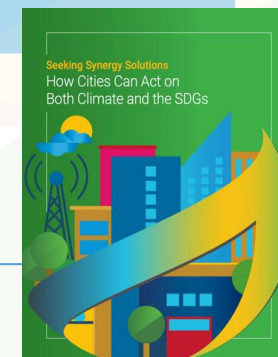
Thematic Report



Deep-dive theme

CITIES PLATFORMS FOR SYNERGISTIC ACTION

Thematic Report



1.

The Need of Synergy

Pursuing the 2030 Agenda and the Paris Agreement in concert can significantly and efficiently advance both agendas.



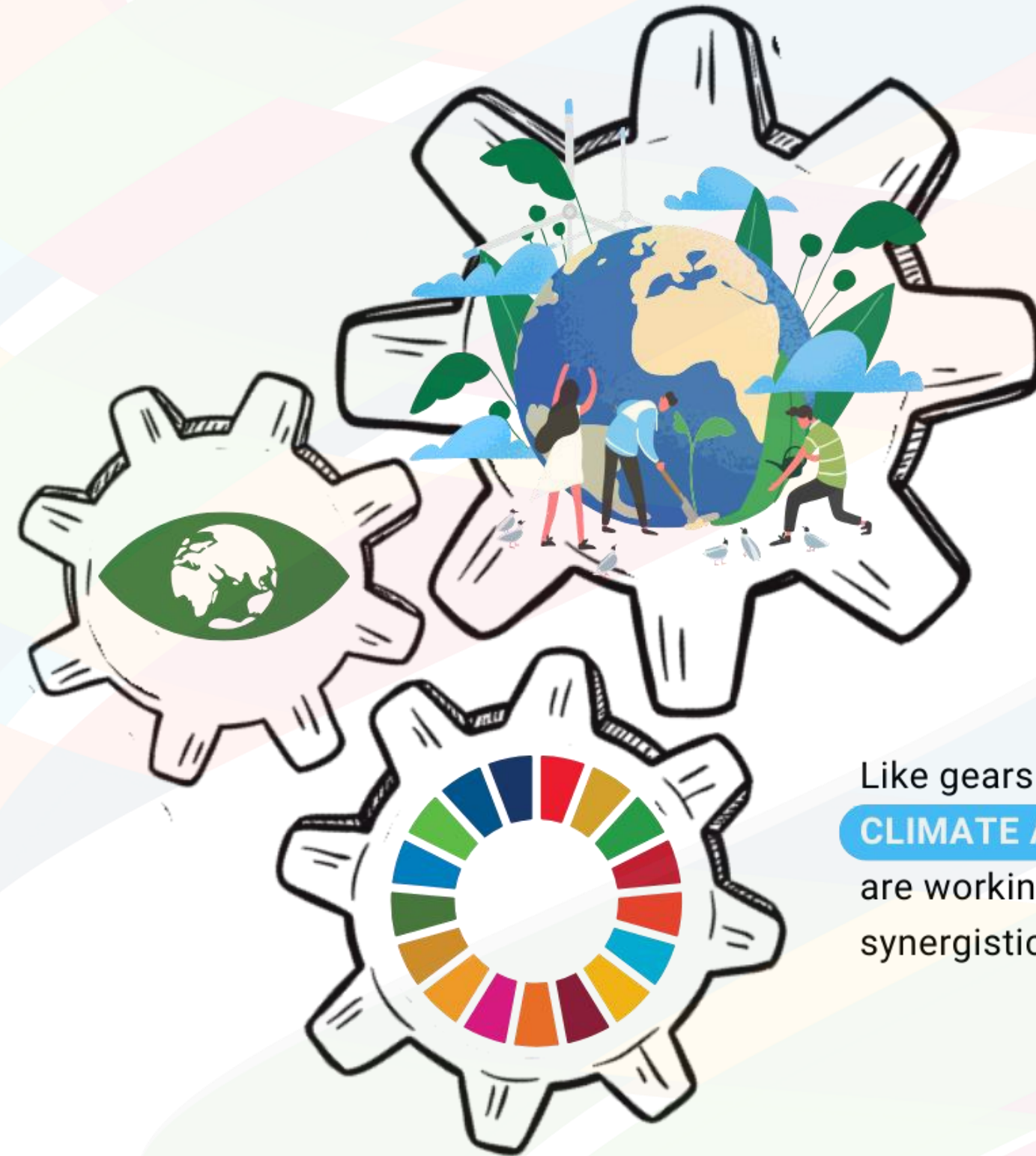
Definition of Synergies and Trade-offs

Definition: Synergies occur when multiple actions combine to produce a result greater than their individual contributions.

In the context of climate change and SDGs, adopting a synergistic approach means addressing these challenges together, **amplifying the impact of policies** by addressing them jointly rather than in isolation.

Definition: Trade offs refer to the negative effects of climate change policies/measures.

Responses to climate change can be planned to maximize synergies and **limit trade-offs** with sustainable development



Like gears in a well-oiled machine, **CLIMATE ACTION and the SDGs** are working together for synergistic, greater benefit

The evidence

80% of the SDGs and targets linked to climate, either positively through co-benefits or negatively through trade-offs.

2030 is a major launchpad for meaningful and sustained transformative actions. Synergistic action must be at the heart of this transformation.

Only 23 of the 173 NDCs explicitly refer to SDGs; none go into detail about how climate policy affects the SDGs' accomplishments

How **climate change will affect the achievement of nearly 60% of SDG targets** is poorly understood. (Fuso Nerini et al., 2019)

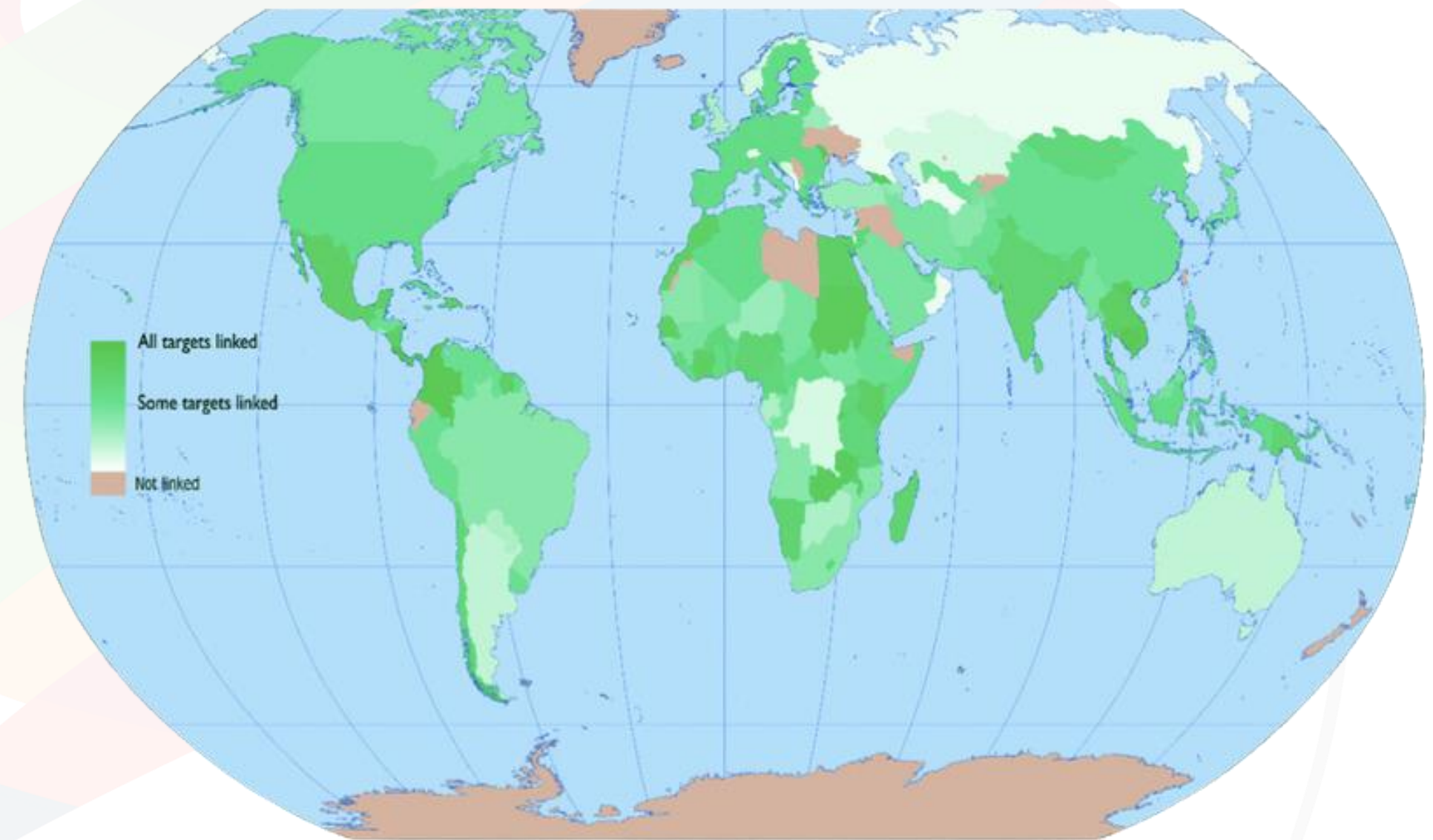


Figure 1: Linkage of SDGs with the countries' NDCs.

Synergistic action will help to course correct

Need for accelerated action: Halfway to the 2030 Agenda, a mere 15% of SDG targets are on track and the climate crisis is worsening as GHG emissions continue to rise.

The impact of acting in silos: The report presents a list of potential negative impacts in terms of short-falls in financial resources, jobs that are put at risk and people at risk of hunger

Reduce financial gaps: Pursuing development and climate targets together reduces investment gaps.

Achieve targets faster: Integrating social dimensions enhances chances of reaching climate targets.

Ensure just transition: Synergistic planning will ensure a just transition and limit the trade-offs of climate action.

4.3 trillion

USD shortfall in financial flows by 2030 to achieve a 1.5°C global climate scenario and mitigate the worst impacts of climate change

When acting in silos...

80 million

jobs are put at risk with a shift to a low-carbon and resource efficient economy without a just transition

84 million

more people at risk of hunger by 2050 without SDG integration in climate efforts

70%

of SDG targets are attainable with climate adaptation measures focused on co-benefits in urban areas

When acting in synergy...

71-99

thousand fewer premature deaths in 2030 due to energy system transition under NDCs

4x

economic gains in co-benefits through transitioning to a green economy

24 million

new jobs created by 2030 through renewable energy

40%

of global population could meet WHO air quality standards with strict air pollution and GHG mitigation measure

2.

The Opportunity



Transformative change options from the Global Stocktake

From COP 28 to COP 29

As a way forward, outcomes of the GST can deliver transformative climate action and support in high-impact areas by prompting actions in the following areas (Srouji & Cogen, 2023):

1. Strengthening NDC and climate finance commitments and implementation
2. increasing renewable energy sources while rapidly and equitably phasing out of fossil fuels.
3. transforming land use, agricultural, forestry, and food systems in order to increase resilience, promote food security, and equitably curtail emissions.
4. rapidly transforming the transportation and industry sector to be more carbon-neutral.
5. increasing funding and other forms of assistance for adaptation, as well as supplying fresh capital to deal with losses and damages, all the while streamlining the application process and efficiently allocating resources at the local level.
6. fulfilling pledges made on climate financing and reorienting international financial flows to the extent required to support net-zero emissions and climate-resilient development.

Framework for synergistic action

How to achieve synergies?

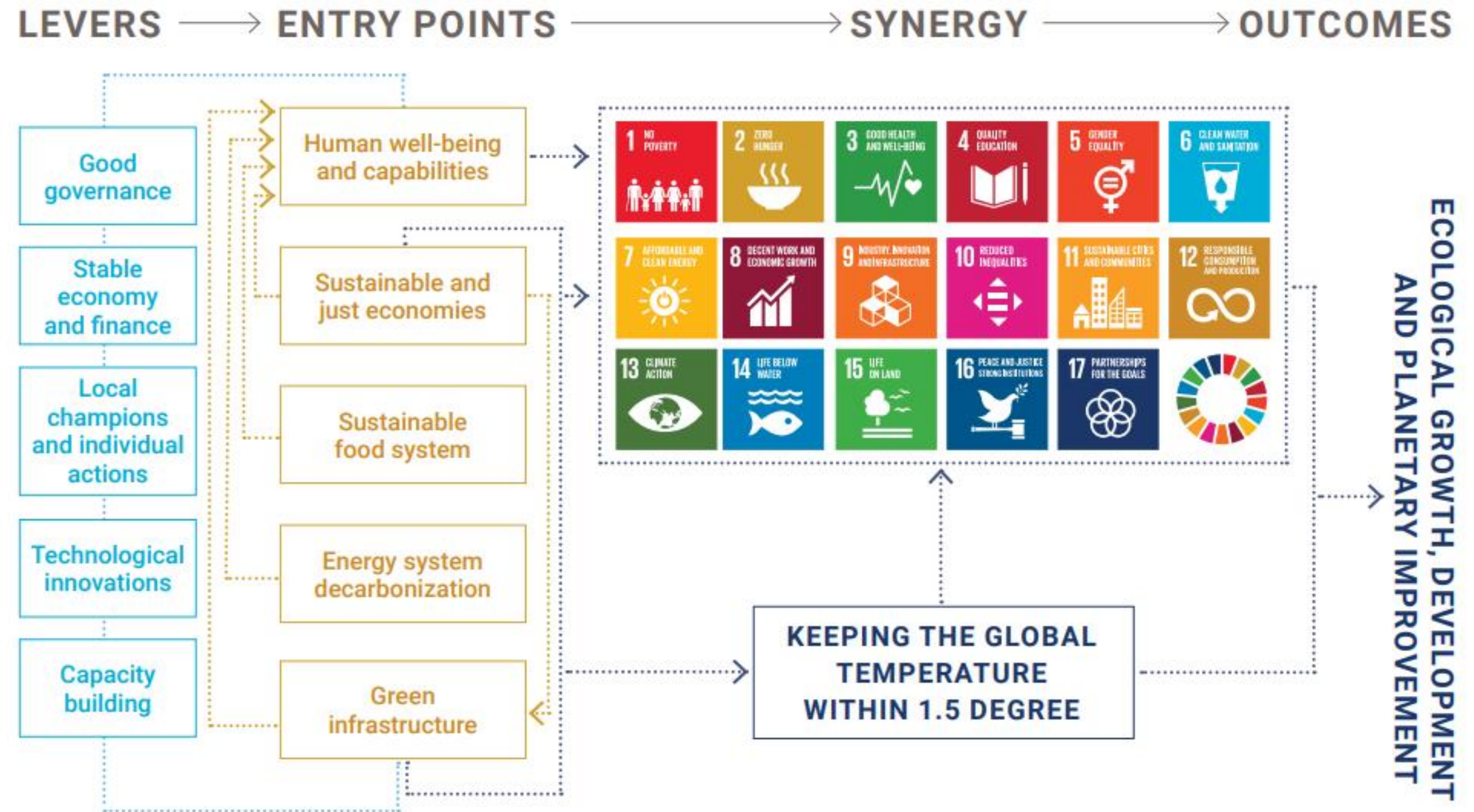
Levers are a set of enablers to promote synergies.

Which step is necessary?

Entry points can be considered as a set of potential primary objectives that can be instrumental in building synergies between climate change and SDG actions.

What is the final result?

The arrows show the interactions between different levers, entry points, SDGs, and climate targets which ultimately lead to economic and ecological growth.



3.

The Challenge

We must solve the climate emergency and sustainable development challenges together, or we will not solve them at all.

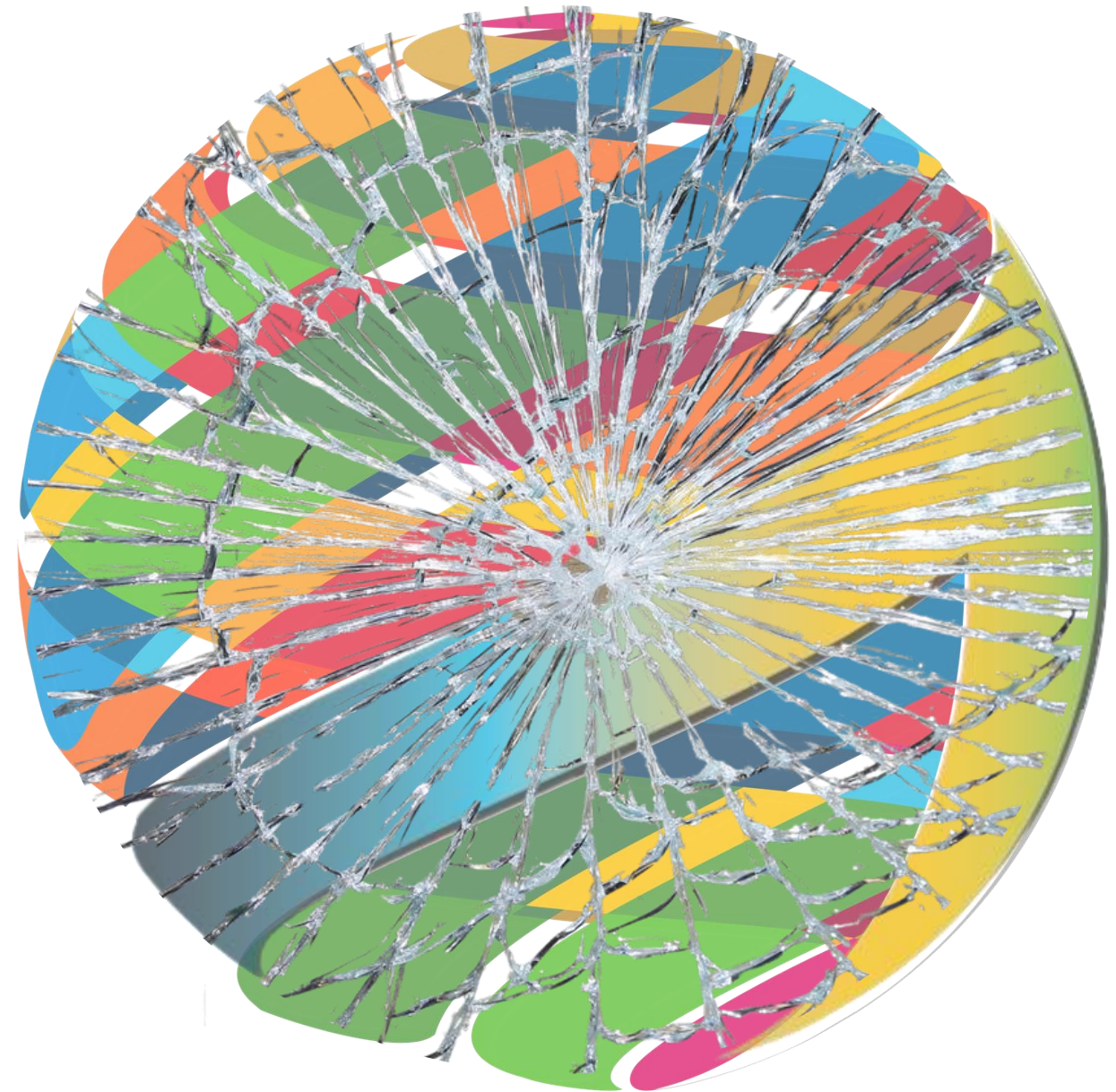


Fragmentation

Only approximately 20 of the 150+ new and updated NDCs explicitly refer to SDGs, with the majority failing to consider the interactions between climate policy and SDGs progress.

These challenges can be overcome through:

1. strengthening institutional coordination, by removing silos, reducing fragmentation, and enabling meaningful participation;
2. overcoming incoherence in implementation, by anticipating policy interaction and negative outcomes and reducing transaction costs from horizontal and vertical coordination;
3. navigating policy constraints, by identifying shared ideas and visions of the benefits from climate and SDG action and navigating vested interests that benefit from status quo
4. frameworks, tools and other resources that can facilitate synergistic action at each step



Fragmentation across governance
Fragmentation across financing
Fragmentation across knowledge

International Financial System and SDGs



A stable international system is a foundation of national economic growth and sustainable development. Financial shocks and crises set back progress on social goals, increasing poverty and hunger. High debt servicing can lower spending on health, education, social protection and other social priorities. Sustained economic growth is also the basis of domestic public resource mobilization, which is essential to finance public goods and services. Domestic resource mobilization also needs effective international tax cooperation to prevent tax evasion.



Entrenched gender biases affect the design and functioning of all aspects of the international financial system. Gender equality objectives should be part of international leadership selection and the mandates and accountability metrics of multilateral development banks.



Developing countries have massive investment needs to deliver infrastructure, including for water, sanitation, and clean energy. A reformed international financial architecture should deliver affordable, long-term financing for such investments.

Increased productive investment also drives growth and sustainable industrialization. Preventing debt and financial crises contributes to decent work and helps the financial system to sustainably expand access to financial services for all.



Reforming international financial institution governance can reduce inequalities in the representation and voice of developing countries in global economic decision-making. Excessive financialization also contributes to inequality. The international financial architecture includes the standards for the regulation and monitoring of financial markets and institutions.



Dedicating more finance to resiliency will reduce the losses from disasters. Investment in urban infrastructure can be boosted by the public development bank system.



Climate change and environmental sustainability need to inform all aspects of the international financial architecture. Climate- and environment-related standards and metrics should inform business, finance, investment, and financial regulation including standards set at the international level. Systemic coherence is between environmental standard setting and economic management is essential.



Financial integrity is a core requirement for a sustainable international financial system. Strengthening international financial integrity standards and their implementation will reduce corruption, boost trust, and enhance the social contract. A reformed international financial architecture should also provide concessional financing for conflict affected countries.

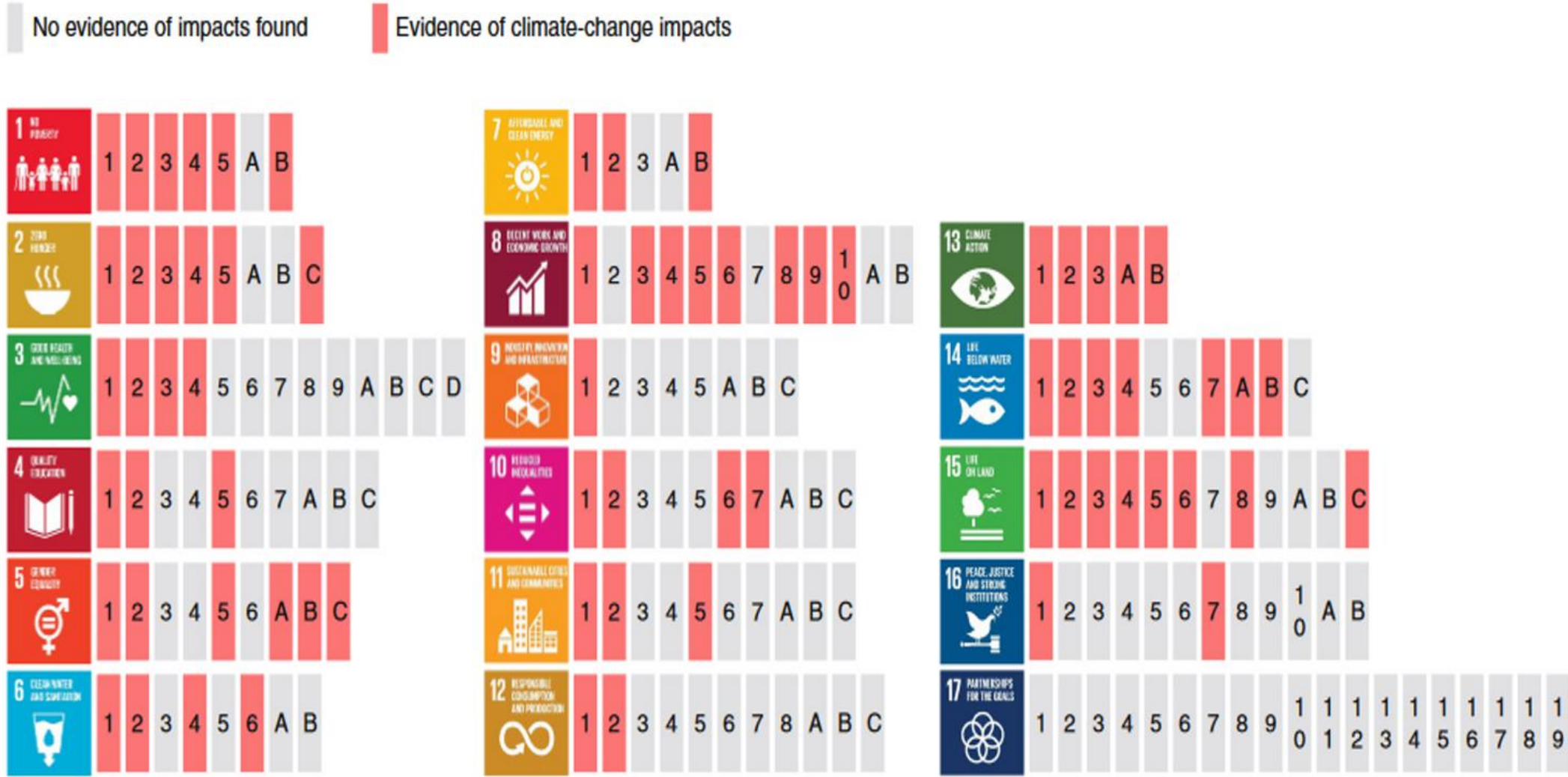


Finance issues are central to the partnerships for the goals and the means of implementation. Reforming the global tax architecture can enhance domestic revenue mobilization. Donors can channel official development assistance commitments through multilateral development banks. Reforms to the debt architecture aim at attaining long-term debt sustainability.

FIGURE 2. The spectrum of sustainable investing Impact of the international financial architecture on the Sustainable Development Goals and Climate

Knowledge barriers

- Enhancing** our understanding of the economic need to pursue synergies eg making the business case for a low carbon economy, biodiversity investments, adaptation, highlighting the cost of inaction in addressing synergies.
- Accurately reflecting** physical climate and transition risks into investment decision-making, eg for green infrastructure investments.
- Facilitating** mechanisms of co-financing through public and private institutions.
- Elucidating** concepts and resolving inconsistencies, eg those regarding green taxonomies.



Localizing global action

Achieving synergies between global climate and sustainable development goals requires tailoring solutions to local contexts.

Top-down approaches often miss local nuances, hindering implementation.

Cities play a crucial role, as urban infrastructure interventions naturally address co-dimensions through space and place governance.

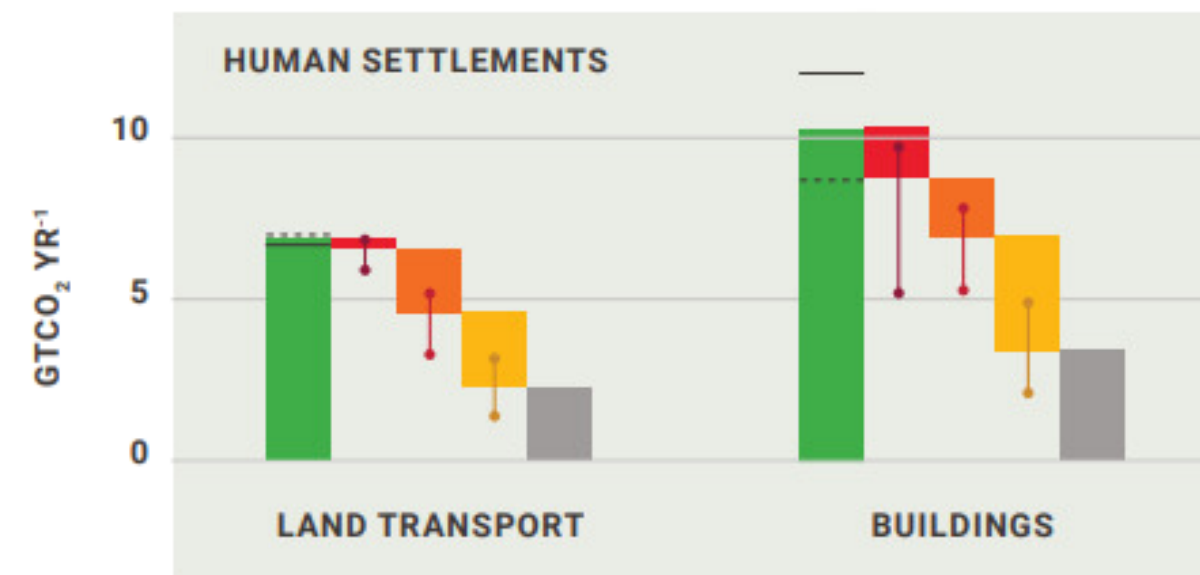
Demand-side solutions are key for synergies, potentially reducing GHG emissions by 40–70% by 2050 without compromising services.

Maximizing health co-benefits of climate policies and air pollution measures is also vital. Mitigation cost to health co-benefit ratios range from 1.4 to 2.45, with co-benefits on air quality estimated between USD 2–196/tCO₂, averaging USD 49/tCO₂, especially benefiting the Global South.

FIGURE Demand-side solutions, categorized into socio-cultural factors, infrastructure use, and end-use technology adoption can reduce GHG emissions in cities by 2050 by more than 50% and, at the same time, improve well-being and address SDGs

— Total emissions 2050 — Socio-cultural — Infrastructure use — End-use technology adoption

! 75% of all demand-side solutions improve human well-being in SDGs 1-9

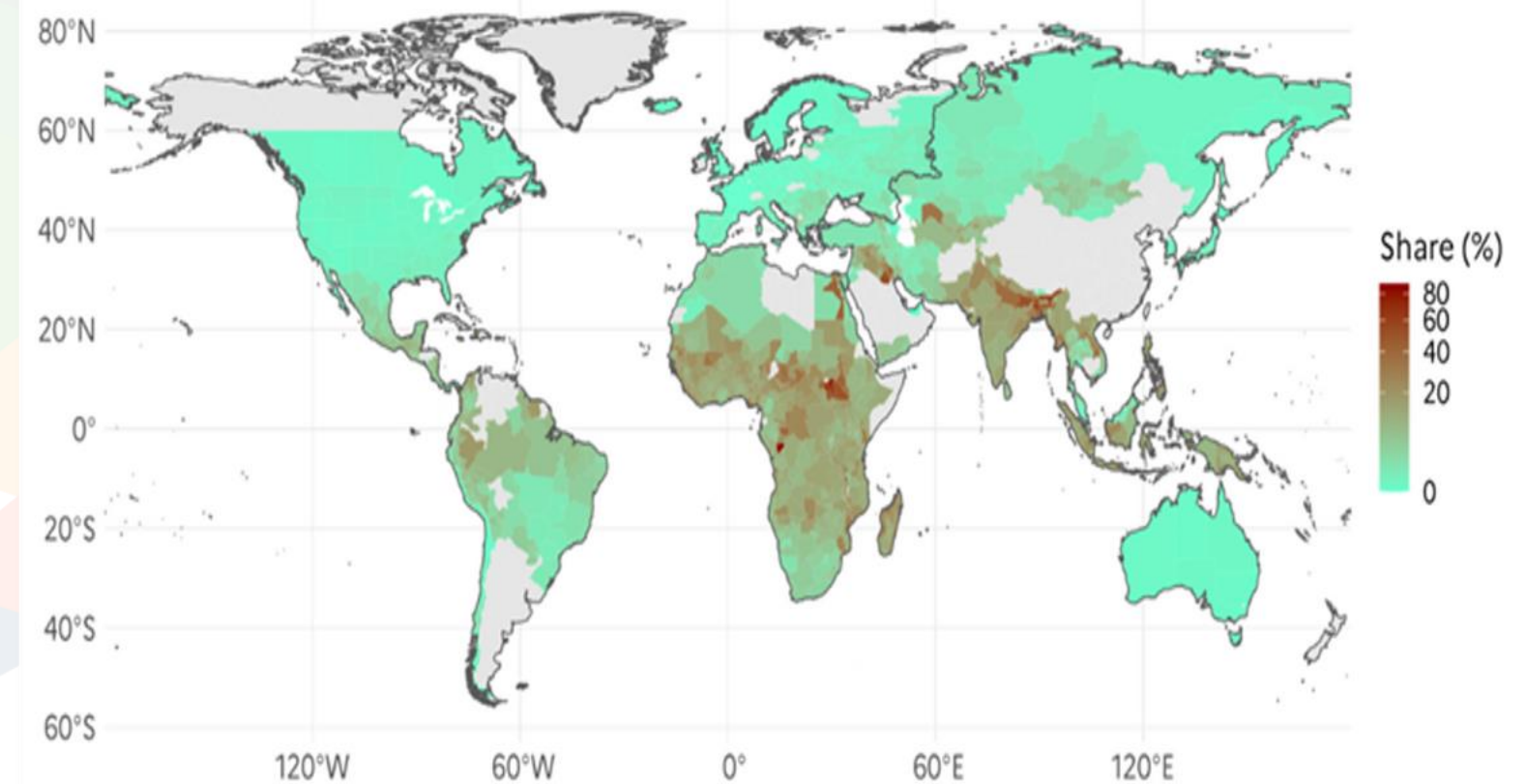
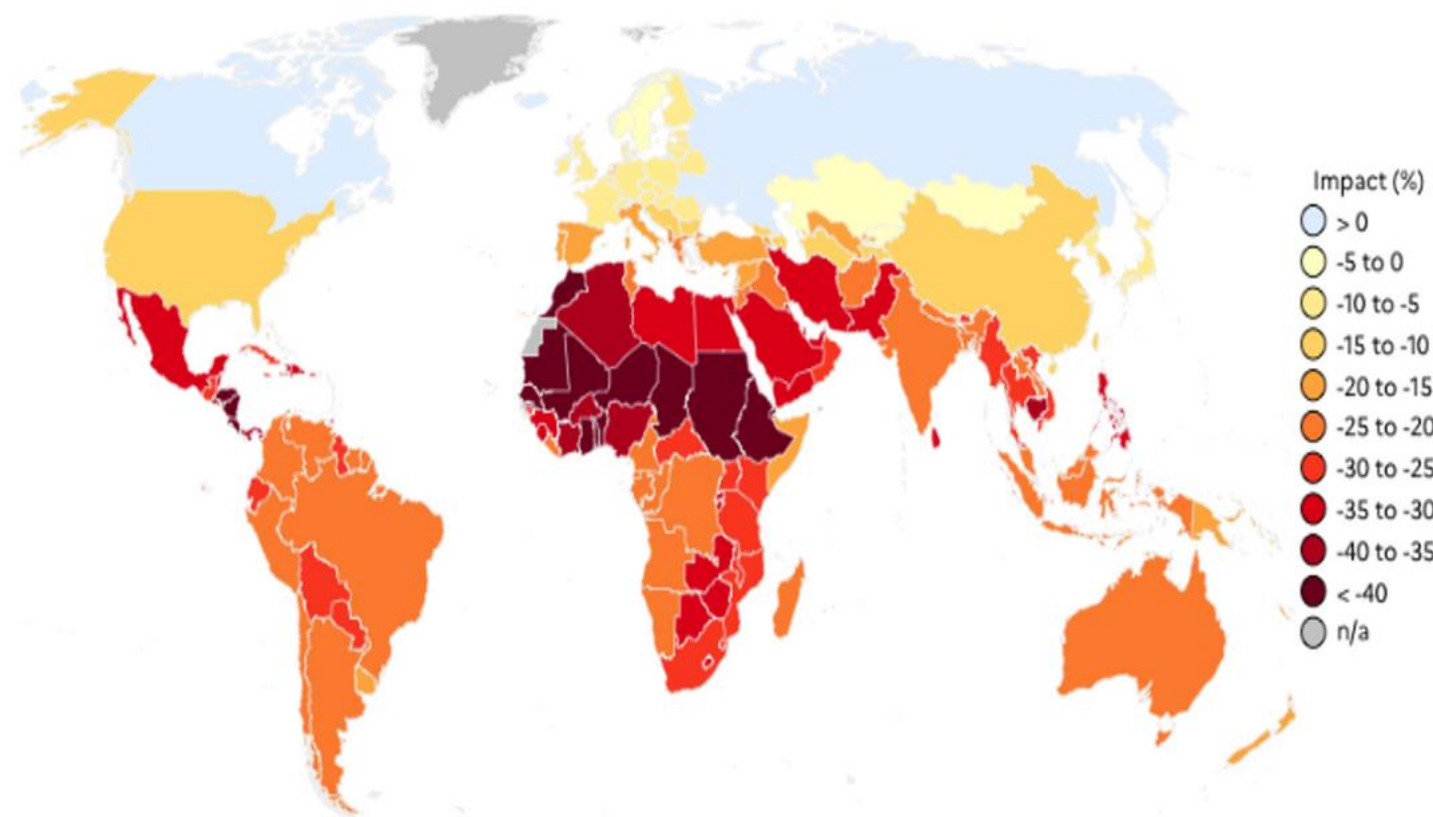


Demand-side solutions can cut GHG emissions by half until 2050.

Source: IPCC, 2022

Framing synergies to be more just

There is a need to focus on reducing risks, building resilience, and ensuring social welfare and justice to advance both sustainable development and climate actions in a manner that does not give rise to distributional impacts



(left) Observed regional effects of climate change on agricultural productivity across the world (1961-2015) (right) Population share exposed to significant flood risk and poverty (using \$5.5/day poverty line) across the world in 2020. (Source: Chancel et al., 2023)

4.

The Way Forward

We must move towards a new architecture for synergistic action by uncovering the barriers and enablers.



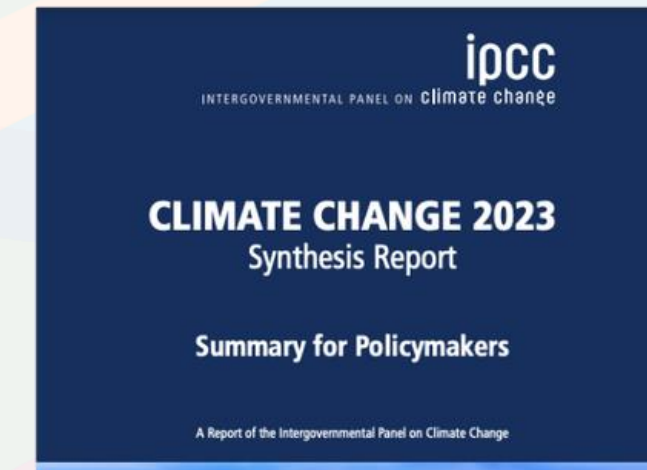
Towards transformative change

The IPCC itself in its recent report calls for deep transitions across various sectors, including energy, buildings, transportation, industry, and agriculture, and forest and other land use (Riahi et al., 2022).

These transformations imply deep structural changes, profound reforms of institutions and governance, shifting mental maps and norms, and changing patterns of human behavior,

Such deep transformations require significant investments to redress the systems to be more compatible with climate and SDG targets.

The six transformative pathways proposed by the Global Sustainable Development Report 2023 would require between USD 5.4 trillion to USD 6.4 trillion per year between 2023 and 2030. This corresponds to an annual cost of USD 1,179 to USD 1,383 per person (UNCTAD 2023).



Unlocking progress

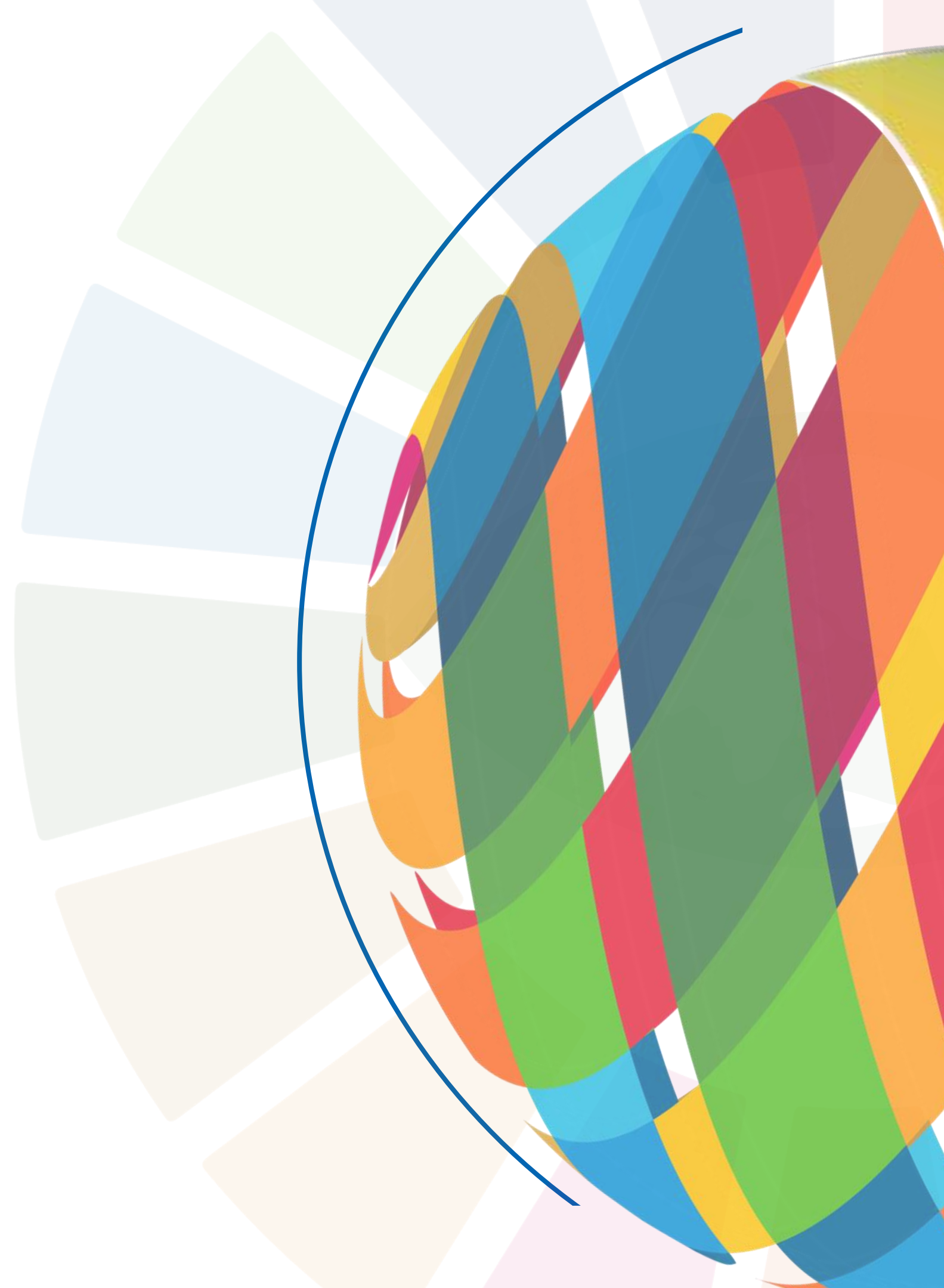
Policy coordination, coherence, and integration are fundamental.

Inclusivity is crucial to address the systemic inertia that is preventing transformative change.

Leverage opportunities by the upcoming **Seventh Assessment Report (AR7) of the IPCC** to influence the policy sphere through a **dedicated chapter** in the special report on cities and the reports by Working Groups II and III.

Critical to grow **institutional capacity** and implement approaches that incorporate consideration of policy outcomes and **anticipate expected and unexpected consequences**, particularly on vulnerable communities who stand to be adversely impacted, **addressing risks and building their resilience**.

A need for the development of a **global platform for knowledge exchange and data sharing** to inform policy decisions and evaluate synergies effectively.



Recommendations

01

Only with unified action can we succeed

Integrating synergistic actions with enhanced cooperation among governments, policymakers, and communities globally is essential

02

Fragmentation is the enemy

Addressing fragmentation in institutional structures and strategies is crucial for enhancing synergies between climate and SDGs

03

Deep reforms needed

Deep reforms across all sectors, including institutional changes and behavioral shifts, are necessary to make meaningful progress

04

Avoiding top-down approaches

Embracing bottom-up approaches involves solutions tailored to local contexts, with strong local engagement and support for community initiatives.

05

Cities as drivers

Cities play a critical role in achieving SDG targets and climate goals through innovative, integrated urban planning and infrastructure development

06

Breaking down silos

Coordinated, integrated policy development and implementation across different government levels and sectors are essential

07

Experts are everywhere

Inclusive engagement across all societal sectors is vital for generating transformative change, particularly incorporating perspectives from marginalized groups

08

Protecting the most vulnerable

Strengthened infrastructure, community capacity, and government collaboration are imperative components for building resilience in communities

09

We cannot 'do' if we don't 'know'

Effective policy-making requires accessible, relevant, and coherent knowledge and data

10

Change won't happen overnight

Sustaining transformative actions is crucial for launching efforts toward a net-zero, resilient future by 2030



United Nations

Department of Economic and Social Affairs



United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change

Read the report



For further information, please contact:
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