



# HIGH-LEVEL POLITICAL FORUM ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

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## 2018 HLPF Review of SDGs implementation: SDG 17 – Strengthen the means of implementation and the global partnership for sustainable development

### Background

Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 17 – “*strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development*” – seeks to build global partnership to support and achieve the ambitious goals and targets of the 2030 Agenda, bringing together national governments, the international community, civil society, the private sector, and other actors. Despite some advances in certain areas in 2017, more needs to be done to accelerate progress. All stakeholders will have to intensify and focus their efforts on the areas where progress has been slow.

SDG 17 reflects a holistic approach to the means of implementation for the 2030 Agenda, including 19 targets that span finance, technology, capacity-building, trade and systemic issues. In addition, the means of implementation are integrated across the other Goals through dedicated targets, underlining their cross-cutting nature. The concrete policies and actions of the Addis Ababa Action Agenda on financing for development provide a strong foundation to support SDG progress.

The session will discuss the main challenges and opportunities for strengthening global partnership and enhancing the means of implementation. Specific attention will be given to exploring the potential innovations for mobilizing resources and technologies for the SDGs. Views, suggestions and current achievements are expected to be shared by practitioners, policymakers and experts based on their most recent experiences and research.

The session will build on the inter-governmentally agreed conclusions and recommendations of the [ECOSOC Forum on Financing for Development](#) in 2018 (A/RES/70/1, §86) and consider the findings and ideas emerging from other related processes, including the [Development Cooperation Forum \(DCF\)](#) and the [World Investment Forum](#). It will likewise build on the summary of the [Multistakeholder Forum on Science, Technology and Innovation \(STI\) for the SDGs](#) and [UN World Data Forum](#). It





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will also promote synergies with the discussion on advancing STI for the SDGs, to be held earlier in the week.

## Progress, Gaps and Way Forward

Achieving the SDGs will require a strengthened commitment to partnership and cooperation. Policy coherence and an enabling environment for sustainable development at all levels, advanced by the commitment of all development actors, are needed to this end.

The recent broad-based upturn in the world economy, accompanied by increased investment and supportive financial market conditions, helped to mobilize resources and provide space for partnerships for the SDGs in 2017. Although progress was not evenly distributed across countries, the positive momentum is expected to continue and provide a platform for further advancement.

This provides an opportunity to focus policymaking and partnerships on addressing longer-standing concerns, and to accelerate the pace of progress towards the SDGs. SDG 17 provides a vision and range of targets for supporting such actions, and the Addis Agenda offers a critical framework in this respect. Policy-makers and development partners will need to build on the present momentum while addressing current and emerging risks.

At the same time, the cyclical upturn masks significant systemic weaknesses and medium-term risks – insufficiently coordinated tightening of financial conditions; inward-looking policies and associated increases in interest rates and debt vulnerabilities; and escalating geopolitical tensions could derail progress. Persistently high levels of inequality, between and within countries, also pose challenges. Declining private investment in infrastructure and a renewed increase in global carbon emissions in 2017 underscore the continued inability to align investment with long-term sustainable development objectives. If unaddressed, such structural impediments and continue to undermine the mobilization of means of implementation and sustainable development prospects.

The impact of these systemic weaknesses could also exacerbate existing challenges faced by vulnerable countries (such as LDCs, LLDCs and SIDS) in attracting long-term investment





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in sustainable development and additional means of implementation. Addressing resource gaps in line with the unique situation of countries with special needs can help to ensure that support and investment is channeled where it is needed to leave no one behind.

Many developing countries have made targeted efforts for enhancing domestic resource mobilization and private sector development. As a result, there are many more actors today at the country level across all MoIs, which need to be carefully mapped out and partnered with. The inter-linked nature of the present global challenges also calls for more coherent collaboration efforts at a global level. The challenge is not limited to simply increasing the quantity of resources for the SDGs, but should also focus on enhancing quality and coherence. This is where the tremendous potential of partnerships should drive change, supported by policy, institutional and broader systemic efforts that are context-specific. It will also be important that partnerships combine the efforts, resources, and expertise of different stakeholders more effectively, while also ensuring accountability on commitments made.

In all such efforts, the availability of quality, accessible, open, timely and disaggregated data is vital. It undergirds evidence-based decision-making and ensures that no one will be left behind. Meeting these data demands will be possible only if the capacities of national statistical systems are strengthened.

Included below are selected findings with respect to recent trends pertaining to SDG-17 and its targets and indicators.

## *Public and Private Finance*

- Taxation is an important instrument in financing domestic development activities, although the developing regions most in need of resources still face challenges collecting taxes. However, the rate of taxation (i.e., ratio of tax revenue to GDP) in the LDCs has declined from the peak of 11.1 per cent in 2012 to 8.8 per cent in 2016. In sub-Saharan Africa, countries faced a similar trend, with the rate of taxation declining from 14.9 per cent in 2006 to 10.7 per cent in 2016.
- In 2017, net ODA from member countries of the Development Assistance Committee (DAC) of the Organization for Economic Co-operation and





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Development (OECD) totaled \$146.6 billion, a decrease of 0.6 per cent from 2016 level in real terms. ODA as a share of donors' gross national income (GNI) remained low at 0.31 per cent. Only five DAC countries – Denmark, Luxembourg, Norway, Sweden and the United Kingdom – met or exceeded the United Nations benchmark for ODA contributions of at least 0.7 per cent of GNI. Furthermore, aid to the LDCs has stagnated in recent years, growing just 1 per cent in real terms in 2016.

- Total foreign direct investment (FDI) flows to developing countries amounted to approximately \$650 billion in 2017. FDI to LDCs was estimated to be around \$33.4 billion (representing a decrease of 11 per cent from 2016). However, FDI remains heavily concentrated in a few countries and in the extractive industries, often providing few forward and backward productive linkages within the economy.
- Aligning investment with long-term sustainable development will require actions on both the supply and demand side, by private and public actors. Domestically, governments should continue to strengthen their enabling environments and develop investable projects, with donor support and capacity building. Internationally, this will require reorienting global financial markets through better aligning incentives along the investment chain with long-term sustainable investment objectives.
- Remittances sent by international migrants to their home countries in the form of personal transfers and compensation of employees have declined to \$538 billion (0.72 per cent of global GDP) in 2016, from \$555 billion in 2015. The recent trend of stricter immigration policies in many migrant-destination countries continue to constrain the flow of remittances.
- Debt risks are increasing, raising concerns about a renewed cycle of debt crises and economic disruption. Developing countries face pressing demands for additional public investments in the SDGs at a time when constraints on further debt financing are likely to become more binding. Greater consideration could be given to the positive impact of investments in infrastructure and productive capacities on debt sustainability, especially if risks are effectively managed, relevant data is collected and debt management capacities are enhanced.





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- Debt service as a proportion of exports of goods and services has been on the rise for five consecutive years in LDCs -- from a low of 3.5 per cent in 2011 to 8.6 per cent in 2016. The recent upward trend followed a decade-long decline in debt service from its height of 13.4 percent in 2001. The ability to sustainably service debts out of export earnings is crucial for countries most in need of resources for development.

## *Technology*

- Despite the worldwide increase in fixed-broadband subscriptions, access to high-speed connections remains largely unavailable in the developing countries. In 2016, high-speed fixed broadband penetration reached 6 per cent of the population in developing countries, compared to 24 per cent in developed countries. Limitations in the capacity and speed of fixed-broadband connections will affect the quality and functionality of this development tool, widening already existing inequalities.
- Half of all households globally still lack access to the Internet. In LDCs, 85 per cent of households are not connected.

## *Aid for Capacity-building*

- Total ODA for capacity-building and national planning amounted to \$20.4 billion in 2016 and represented 18 per cent of total aid allocable by sector, a proportion that has been stable since 2010. Of the total, Latin America and the Caribbean received \$5.1 billion, sub-Saharan Africa received \$4.6 billion and Southern Asia received \$3.8 billion. The three main sectors assisted were public administration, environment and energy, which received a total of \$10.2 billion.

## *Trade*

- The volume of world trade grew by 3.7 per cent in 2017 and appears set to continue at a similar pace through 2019. Yet, the share of least developed countries in global exports has declined every year since 2011, and now stands at 0.91 percent of trade.







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- At the outset of 2018, the threat and implementation of trade barriers and retaliatory measures risk undermining the strength and sustainability of global growth with potentially large repercussions, especially for the developing economies. This could also reverse progress made in lowering trade barriers. The latest available data show that tariffs applied under preferential trade agreements, which include bilateral and regional free trade agreements, have been declining over time. In 2016, the trade-weighted average preferential tariff rate applied to imports from LDCs was 7.9 per cent, a two-percentage points drop from the 2005 level. For developing regions, the average preferential tariff rate dropped by 1.2 percentage points during the same period.

## *Systemic issues (including policy and institutional coherence; multi-stakeholder partnerships; and data, monitoring and accountability)*

- In 2016, 81 developing countries undertook national exercises to monitor development effectiveness, demonstrating their commitment to strengthening the means for SDG implementation and the quality of multi-stakeholder partnerships. Half of the countries showing overall progress are fragile states and SIDS.
- In 2017, 102 countries or areas were implementing national statistical plans. Sub-Saharan Africa remains at the lead of implementation with 31 countries implementing such plans, however only 3 of them were fully funded.
- In 2015, developing countries received \$541 million in financial support from multilateral and bilateral donors for all areas of statistics. This amount accounts for only 0.3 per cent of total ODA, short of what is needed to ensure that countries in developing regions are better equipped to implement and monitor their development agenda.
- Population and housing censuses are a primary source of the disaggregated data needed to formulate, implement and monitor development policies and programmes. During the 10-year span from 2008 to 2017, 89 per cent of countries or areas around the world conducted at least one population and housing census.





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## Key Questions for Further Discussion

- What are the main hurdles to investing in, and financing, the SDGs, using all sources: public and private, domestic and international? Which policies, approaches and institutional solutions have worked best in specific country contexts and how can they be scaled up?
- What kind of partnership or collaboration is needed between the public and private sectors to achieve the goal of financing the SDGs? What should be done to achieve that?
- How can the benefits of collaboration between researchers/scientists, investors, and practitioners, more effectively apply cutting-edge technology in development endeavours in a timely manner? What are the main recommendations for high-impact actions in this area?
- How can capacity building interventions in technology be applied at the national level to ensure transformation towards sustainable and resilient societies?
- What are some innovations in South-South cooperation that are complementing efforts by other actors to support national plans and mobilize resources for the SDGs?
- Which policy actions are needed to address both long-standing concerns and near-term challenges in the international trade and financial system?
- Who are the furthest behind and who is at risk of being left behind for this SDG?
- How do we ensure that sufficient resources are geared at improving the lives of the furthest behind?

