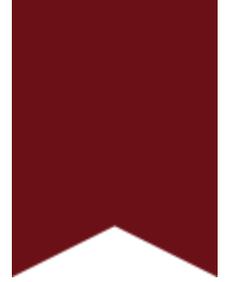


December 2025

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Haganum Model United Nations XVI



Ensuring the accomplishment of the Sustainable Development Goals

Special Conference 2 (SPC2)

**SUSTAINABLE
DEVELOPMENT
GOALS**

The logo for the Sustainable Development Goals, featuring the word "GOALS" in large blue letters. The letter "O" is replaced by a circular icon composed of 17 colored segments, representing the 17 goals.

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Introduction

The Sustainable Development Goals are a set of 17 universal goals set by the United Nations (UN) and they are intended to be achieved by the year 2030. These goals were adopted in 2015 as a replacement for the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)

The core objectives of these goals are to end extreme poverty, reduce global inequality, protect the environment and promote sustainable economic development and growth. Many of these goals are off track, or have regressed due to conflict, and recently the Covid-19 pandemic. The impact if these goals were to fail, would ensure an increased rate of poverty and hunger, multiple climate related disasters, migration pressures and increased political instability.

Multilateral cooperation

Ensuring the accomplishment of the SDGs requires multilateral cooperation, because issues such as climate change, poverty and inequality are borderless, requiring shared resources, expertise and coordination that no single nation can provide on its own.

Definition of key terms

Agenda 2030: Global plan adopted by the UN in 2015 featuring 17 SDGs to end poverty, protect the planet and ensure peace and prosperity by 2030.

Development financing: Mobilizing all financial resources, public, private, domestic, and international to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Global inequality: The vast, uneven distribution of wealth, resources, opportunities, power, and quality of life among people and nations worldwide.

Global South: The nations of the world which are regarded as having a relatively low level of economic and industrial development, and are typically located to the south of more industrialized nations.

Public-private partnerships (PPPs): a long-term agreement where a government entity collaborates with a private company to finance, design, build, and/or operate public infrastructure or services, sharing resources, risks, and rewards to deliver projects like roads, hospitals, or schools more efficiently.

Sustainable development: Economic development that is conducted without the depletion of natural resources and without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs.

Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs): 17 interconnected global goals adopted by the UN in 2015 as a blueprint for peace and prosperity by 2030, aiming to end poverty, protect the planet, and ensure well-being for all by balancing social, economic, and environmental needs.

Technology transfer: The systematic sharing of scientific knowledge, skills, and technology to foster economic development and solve global challenges, moving inventions from labs to society and markets, especially to benefit developing countries through mechanisms like licensing, training, and collaborations, crucial for climate action and innovation.

Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs): country-led self-assessments presented at the UN High-Level Political Forum (HLPF) where nations report on their progress, challenges, and lessons learned in implementing the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of the 2030 Agenda, focusing on sharing experiences, identifying gaps, and fostering global partnerships for sustainable development.

Global Financing Gap: Gap between what is needed to fund a project, and all the capital available to fund it. This requires external funds to be used such as loans or putting up equity to cover the costs.

Official Development Assistance (ODA): Government-funded aid used to promote economic growth and welfare in developing countries.

Blended Finance: An investment strategy that uses catalytic capital from public or philanthropic sources to attract private sector investment in projects that contribute to sustainable development.

General Overview

Background

The SDGs were adopted in 2015 by all of the UN member states as part of Agenda 2030. These goals succeeded the partially successful Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), which were adopted in 2000 and succeeded by the SDGs in 2015. While the MDGs achieved partial success, improving things such as reducing extreme poverty, they focused mainly on developing countries, and did not give enough attention to issues such as inequality, sustainability and governance.

The SDGs were designed to be universal, integrated and inclusive. This means that they count for all countries, the goals are connected with each other, and they leave no country or person behind.

Structure and scope

The SDGs consist of 17 specific goals, 169 specific targets and 234 unique indicators. The various goals are grouped together in 3 different dimensions. The first is social goals, consisting of resolving issues such as poverty, education and gender equality. The second dimension consists of economic goals, consisting of things such as economic growth, employment and infrastructure. The final consists of environmental goals, consisting of things such as biodiversity, climate actions and protecting the oceans.

Each of these goals are interconnected and interdependent, meaning that the goal of poverty reduction depends on an improvement in education and healthcare. Economic growth depends on sustainability and climate action affects things such as food security, water shortages and migration.

Current progress

In the first four years after adopting the SDGs, there was progress in various goals, most notably in the reduction of extreme poverty in some regions. There was also a global improvement in access to education and basic healthcare. In the year 2020 there were major regressions. Covid-19 was the main factor behind this recession, reversing the previous progress in extreme poverty reduction, due to the fact that people were unable to work and provide for their families. Due to the virus, many schools also closed down, leading to learning losses, resulting in a reduced access to education. There was also a large strain on healthcare providers. Hospitals were full of Covid victims, and therefore there was barely any space for patients suffering from other ailments.

According to the UN, less than 20% of the SDG targets are on track to be achieved by the year 2030. Many of these targets show insufficient or negative progress towards reaching the goals by the end of the decade.

Goals showing the least progress.

The five goals showing the least amount of progress are: No poverty (SDG 1), Zero hunger (SDG 2), Reduced inequalities (SDG 10), Climate action (SDG 13) and Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions (SDG 16)

SDG 1: Global poverty has increased for the first time in decades due to an overlap in various crises, that being Covid-19, increased debt, conflicts etc...

SDG 2: Rising food insecurity is happening due to conflicts and climate change. This also overlaps with SDG 6 (clean water and sanitation), which is necessary to irrigate crops in arid regions such as the Sahel region.

SDG 10: Income gaps within countries are increasing. The rich are getting richer while the poor keep getting poorer. This is happening all over the world, but mostly in regions such as Sub-Saharan Africa, South America and emerging global economies.

SDG 13: Fossil fuel emissions keep rising. While there have been major developments in environmentally friendly sectors (Energy etc...), this has not been enough to reduce the emissions causing climate change.

SDG 16: An increase in regional, national and international conflicts has led to the decreased power of institutions responsible for the preservation of peace and justice.

Regional and National disparities

Less economically developed countries (LEDCs): LEDCs face various challenges, such as limited fiscal capacity, lots of debt burdens and are often more vulnerable to climate shocks, such as droughts or floods.

Middle income countries: Middle income countries are often left out of aid packages, while at the same time still facing issues. This means that there are development gaps while there is no help coming from the international community. These countries sometimes have trouble keeping up with the SDGs.

More economically developed countries (MEDCs): MEDCs usually accomplish some of the SDGs, however, they often lag in taking care of issues such as sustainability, emission reductions and the protection of biodiversity. Things like overfishing, unsustainable farming and overuse of fossil fuels lead many MEDCs to lag behind in the completion of some of the SDGs by the year 2030.

Key obstacles

Financial constraints: The global financing gap to fund the SDGs is estimated to be around one trillion dollars. The level of Official Development Assistance (ODA) is also declining, meaning that developing countries have less funds to invest into achieving the SDGs.

Political instability and conflict: Armed conflicts often lead to the destruction of vital infrastructure and institutions. In conflict zones, it also becomes increasingly difficult to implement long term development plans. These conflicts also increase the number of displaced people significantly. Because of these issues, the achievement of the SDGs becomes increasingly complicated.

Governance and institutional weaknesses: Things such as corruption, weak institutions and poor coordination between ministries and sectors lead to diversions in development funds and a limit in policy implementation.

Climate change and environmental degradation: Extreme weather events, rising sea levels and environmental damage all pose challenges to the achievement of the SDGs. They disrupt agriculture, threaten coastal and island regions and undermine long term development.

International Cooperation: States often prioritise short term economic development and domestic concerns instead of long term sustainable development goals. Less economically developed countries often also rely on aid and technology from more economically developed countries. This leads to an imbalance in partnerships and a lack of trust between states. Conflicts, disputes and rivalries can also lead to problems when trying to achieve the SDGs, as they may undermine multilateral cooperation between countries.

Data monitoring and accountability challenges

Many countries lack the necessary measures to collect data and a capacity to measure the SDG indicators. VNRs that are necessary to measure indicators are non-binding, meaning that countries don't have to disclose the information they have. This leads to challenges when trying to monitor the various indicators needed to measure the accomplishment of the SDGs. When the VNRs are shared, they often vary in transparency and quality. This means that even though countries share information, it can be hard to figure out what can be seen as reliable.

Role of international cooperation

The achievement of the SDGs can not be accomplished by states acting alone. There are many challenges such as climate change, migration and trade and supply chains. Major cooperation is necessary in sectors such as financing, capacity building and knowledge sharing.

Major parties involved

Developing countries: Developing countries attempt to achieve the SDGs, while still trying to grow economically. They depend a lot on foreign aid and technology but at the same time, they face structural challenges such as debt and infrastructure gaps.

Developed countries: These countries are major contributors of development aid and financing of the achievement of the SDGs. At the same time, they are a major contributor to global emissions and consumption patterns responsible for things such as climate change. Sometimes they do fail to meet aid commitments, causing problems further down the road.

Non Governmental Organizations (NGOs): NGOs tend to focus on grassroots implementations to fix problems. This means that they try to fix the problems from the bottom up, driven by local efforts instead of relying on directives from local authorities. These efforts are often limited by lack of funding and access to areas. One such example is OXFAM, which focuses on reducing extreme poverty.

Private Sector & Multinational Corporations: The private sector drives innovation to create sustainable solutions. This sector offers jobs, opportunities and financing to achieve the goals set by the UN. The private sector is a major contributor to the achievement of the SDGs, bridging gaps in financing and implementation that governments are unable to fill alone.

United Nations: The UN takes responsibility for coordinating and overseeing the operations being undertaken to achieve the SDGs. With help from various agencies and councils such as the UN development programme (UNDP) and the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), the UN can monitor progress and provide the technical assistance necessary to achieve the SDGs.

Timeline of events

2000 September 08 The United Nations adopts the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), establishing global development targets to be achieved by 2015.

2012 June 20–22 The Rio+20 Conference on Sustainable Development calls for the creation of a comprehensive development framework to succeed the MDGs.

2015 September 25 The United Nations General Assembly adopts Resolution 70/1, establishing Agenda 2030 and the 17 Sustainable Development Goals.

2016 January 01 Agenda 2030 enters into force, and UN Member States begin implementing the SDGs at national and international levels.

2020 March 11 The COVID-19 outbreak is declared a global pandemic, severely disrupting global progress toward the SDGs.

2023 September 18–19 The UN convenes the SDG Summit, concluding that most SDG targets are not on track to be achieved by 2030.

2024 January 01 The United Nations issues renewed calls for accelerated action, increased financing, and strengthened cooperation to recover SDG progress.

2025 January 01 Governments and international organisations intensify final acceleration efforts in preparation for the 2030 deadline.

Relevant UN treaties and events

UNGA Resolution 70/1 “Transforming our world: the 2030 agenda for sustainable development” this resolution establishes the 17 Sustainable Development Goals and their 169 targets.

Addis Ababa Action Agenda (AAAA) This is a UN framework from 2015 that guides the financing for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

High-Level Political Forum (HLPF) The HLPF is an event held annually under the auspices of ECOSOC and every four years under the auspices of the UN General Assembly. It is a subdivision of both the General Assembly and ECOSOC and is responsible for the entire organisation’s policy on sustainable development.

Previous attempts to solve the issue

Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) The MDGs reduced global poverty, but had uneven success. These goals focussed on easily accessible populations instead of more marginalized groups. They failed to address the root causes of the problems.

National SDG strategies: National SDG strategies differ significantly from country to country. In more developed countries, achieving these goals is less challenging than in LEDCs. Things such as a lack of political will and financial gaps leads to a less than ideal outcome when attempting to achieve the SDGs.

Development aid programs Development aid programs aim to promote welfare and economic development and have produced significant successes in various countries, however their overall effectiveness remains a subject of debate.

Public-private partnerships (PPPs) PPPs are a viable and effective solution to achieve the SDGs. They work particularly well in infrastructure development, but their success is dependent on strong government frameworks. If these frameworks are weak, their effectiveness varies greatly.

Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs) VNRs are an essential platform for actions to achieve the SDGs. They are a valuable mechanism to track the progress of the SDGs, but their effectiveness depends on national commitment and transparency. They are non-binding and therefore a country is allowed to refuse one or give only partial information.

Possible solutions

Strengthening global SDG financing mechanisms

This solution calls for an increase in compliance with the ODA commitments. By expanding blended finance, private capital and public funding can be mobilised and used to achieve the SDGs. Alongside this expansion, an introduction of SDG linked debt relief and restructuring can aid heavily indebted countries, making it a great incentive for these countries to do their best to achieve the goals. These solutions could lead to long term investments in health, education and climate action.

Improving national implementation and accountability of the SDGs

By integrating the implementation of the SDGs into national development strategies and state budgets, it won't be seen as an outside problem, but something that countries can also take care of themselves. In combination with this, a reform of VNRs through standardisation and peer review would improve and strengthen the data monitoring systems that lay a base for the measurement of the achievement of the SDGs.

Expanding technology transfer and capacity building cooperation

This solution would facilitate the transfer of technology in areas such as renewable energy, healthcare, education, and agriculture. By supporting capacity building programmes, global cooperation and information sharing platforms, achieving the SDGs would occur at a higher rate, while at the same time strengthening long term national self sufficiency and overall global cooperation.