

United Nations

A/78/XX - E/2023/xx



General Assembly

Distr.: General

Economic and Social Council

23 April 2023

Advance unedited version

Original: English

2023 session

xx July 2022–xx July 2023

Agenda item xx

Operational activities for development: operational activities for development of the United Nations System

Implementation of General Assembly resolution 75/233 on the quadrennial comprehensive policy review of operational activities for development of the United Nations system

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

The report of the Secretary-General, pursuant to General Assembly resolutions 72/279, 75/233 and 77/184, provides an update on the system-wide implementation of the quadrennial comprehensive policy review and the reform of the United Nations development system. In keeping with the provisions of General Assembly resolution 76/4, the report also gives an update on the progress made in implementing the review of the resident coordinator system.

Amidst setbacks and reversals at the halfway point to the target date of 2030 for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the report addresses how the United Nations development system supported countries in strengthening transformative policies to accelerate progress towards the SDGs. The report also examines progress made in delivering on the pledge of leaving no one behind, including critical support provided by the United Nations development system to youth, women and girls, and persons with disabilities.

Scaling up means of implementation to advance the SDGs is detailed in the report, with analysis on the development system offer to boost financing for development, catalyze partnerships and harness science, technology, and innovation. The report pays special attention to the support provided to least developed countries, landlocked developing countries, and small island developing States, as well as middle-income countries. It

identifies high, and rising, levels of satisfaction among Member States with the alignment of the United Nations development system with national needs and priorities.

The report also addresses progress made in strengthening the United Nations development system’s oversight, system-wide evaluations and results-based management and reporting. The independent findings of the United Nations Sustainable Development Group System-Wide Evaluation Office are incorporate throughout. The report also evaluates critical improvements made on the funding of the United Nations development system and provides an update on funding the resident coordinator system.

The report draws on the findings of surveys administered by the Department of Economic and Social Affairs between December 2022 and January 2023, addressed to host country Governments and voluntary contributor Governments, headquarters of United Nations development entities, resident coordinators, and United Nations country teams. Inputs were sought from across the system, including the United Nations Sustainable Development Group. Financial data was sourced primarily from the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination.

I. Introduction

1. The world is facing troubled times. Poverty and hunger are growing. The climate emergency is escalating. Lives and livelihoods are at risk from overlapping food, energy and financial crises that have been amplified by the conflict in Ukraine. The Sustainable Development Goals are off track. The rights of millions of women and girls are being trampled on. While military spending grows, the number of conflicts increase and humanitarian spending struggles to keep up with demand, sustainable development is chronically under-resourced.
2. We all know, however, that sustainable development is the only comprehensive solution. It is the only way to address the drivers of instability, vulnerability and structural inequality. It is the only way to leave no one behind. It is humanity’s ultimate prevention tool.
3. This report outlines the work of the United Nations development system advancing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, in line with the mandates of the 2020 quadrennial comprehensive policy review.
4. The report reflects the results of several surveys¹ designed to track progress in meeting the policy review mandate. This edition of the report is the most data rich yet. It benefits from multiple years of consistent

¹ The surveys were conducted in early 2023 by the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs. They include a survey of host country Governments, completed by 66 per cent of the total number of countries; and a survey of Governments that are voluntary contributors to the United Nations development system, which received 72 responses, including 11 of the top 20 contributors. A survey of resident coordinators was completed by 95 per cent of the total, while 799 UN country team members from 44 entities took part in a survey of United

data from these surveys, allowing more thorough comparisons over time. This edition is also bolstered by objective insight garnered from independent evaluations conducted by the newly established United Nations Development Group System-wide Evaluation Office.

5. All data, from different sources, continue to point to the same direction: the investments made in the repositioning of the UN development system are delivering results. It is what gives me hope that we can be strong partners as governments work to rescue the SDGs.
6. Host countries are reporting increasing levels of satisfaction with the United Nations development system offer. The development system is consistently reported as their preferred partner for integrated, evidence-based policy advice. Countries in special situations are reporting particularly favorably. All least developed and landlocked developing countries report that development system activities are closely aligned with their needs and priorities. Ninety-five per cent of African countries perceive likewise.
7. In my previous report (A/77/69-E/2022/47), I noted with concern that the satisfaction of small island developing states was relatively low. Seventy per cent of these states were satisfied with the alignment of the United Nations development system support in 2019. This ratio has improved to 84 per cent in 2021 and 95 per cent in 2022. This is due, at least in part, to the reforms of the multi-country resident coordinator offices, which service almost all small island developing states. We now have greater capacities on the ground and enhanced engagement at all levels.
8. Findings from the surveys, as well as recent reports and evaluations, provide strong evidence that we have made great strides in lifting the coherence and collective offer at the country level under the leadership of resident coordinators. Country team programming and policy support is increasingly well regarded by host governments, with stronger alignment to national needs and priorities. Resident coordinators are doing more than simply coordinating. They are utilizing their convening power and bringing the system together to deliver more than the sum of its parts. Ninety-two per cent of host country governments expressed appreciation for the work of resident coordinators in leveraging partnerships to achieve the SDGs.
9. Collective action during the COVID-19 crisis has evolved into support to build more robust health systems. Joint action on social protection helped an additional 147 million people in 39 countries and territories gain temporary and permanent coverage. The Global Crisis Response Group demonstrated our ability to deliver ‘development in emergency mode.’ In response to the mandate for environmental protection in the quadrennial review, the United Nations development system has supported climate mitigation and adaptation, while also assisting biodiversity conservation through sustainable development.
10. The United Nations system has started to step up in its ability to help countries leverage financing at unprecedented scale. The United Nations is now at the forefront of important debates on ways to enhance access by the developing world to affordable long-term finance to deliver on the SDGs and climate agreements. With DESA, UNDP, UNCTAD and regional commissions leading the charge, the system is making progress. But the transformation in this area must accelerate as a matter of urgency. Around 70 per cent of host countries reported that the support they have received on Integrated National Financing Frameworks is adequate. This confirms that the UN development system is reasserting its historic roles in the financing landscape; but this remains the lowest satisfaction rating across all areas of support provided by the development system. Our performance varies greatly according to sectors, and this must be

Nations country teams. A survey of headquarters of United Nations development entities drew responses from 30 organizations accounting for 97 per cent of all funding for operational activities for development.

harmonized. In health, for instance, only 66 per cent of host governments report receiving support on finance for health, compared with 91 per cent who received support on improving health coverage.

11. The repositioned United Nations development system is generating significant efficiencies. In 2022, the system reported efficiency gains of 405 million USD. The significant majority of host and contributing governments report that resident coordinators reduce duplication among entities and improve coordination.
12. Progress on meeting the commitments of the Funding Compact remains insufficient. Core funding has increased, and development system accountability measures have been enhanced. The capitalization of the Joint SDG Fund, however, has declined by 75 per cent. Development funding generally remains highly dependent on a handful of government donors. We must find ways forward. I call for country-level dialogues between Member States, resident coordinators and country teams to seize back the momentum toward achieving the ambition of the Funding Compact.
13. I am particularly concerned by the fact that the resident coordinator system has a funding gap of 85 million USD. The resident coordinator system is the anchor on which the wider system sits as it strengthens its support to the 2030 Agenda. An underfunded system will hamper our ability to continue to make progress. It will impede the reform to deliver at its full potential. Ultimately, it will reduce the prospects of a more impactful UN development system. Time has come to put this issue at rest. I am recommending that Member States reconsider the alternative funding models I have put forward in the review of the resident coordinator system in 2021, with an increased component of assessed funding.
14. This is a time for action and resolve. The SDG Summit in September will be a crucial moment to raise ambition and invest in the necessary transformations to accelerate progress. We must take this opportunity to restore momentum towards our shared goals. The United Nations development system will exert every effort to make this transformation a reality. Billions of lives across the world depend on it. Let us keep this in mind.

II. Changing the game: leveraging the repositioned UN development system architecture to support countries accelerate efforts to implement the 2030 Agenda

A. Maximizing the impact of the new generation of United Nations country teams and the reinvigorated resident coordinator system

16. Resident coordinators that are empowered, impartial and independent are the cornerstone of the repositioned United Nations development system. They provide the necessary leadership and impartiality required for an integrated policy and programmatic response by UN country teams, focused squarely on country needs and priorities. Through resolutions 72/279 and 75/233, Member States asked me to ensure that resident coordinators bring the most out of the collective resources of the United Nations and drive cohesive country teams. The General Assembly reaffirmed this direction in its review of the resident coordinator system in 2021.²

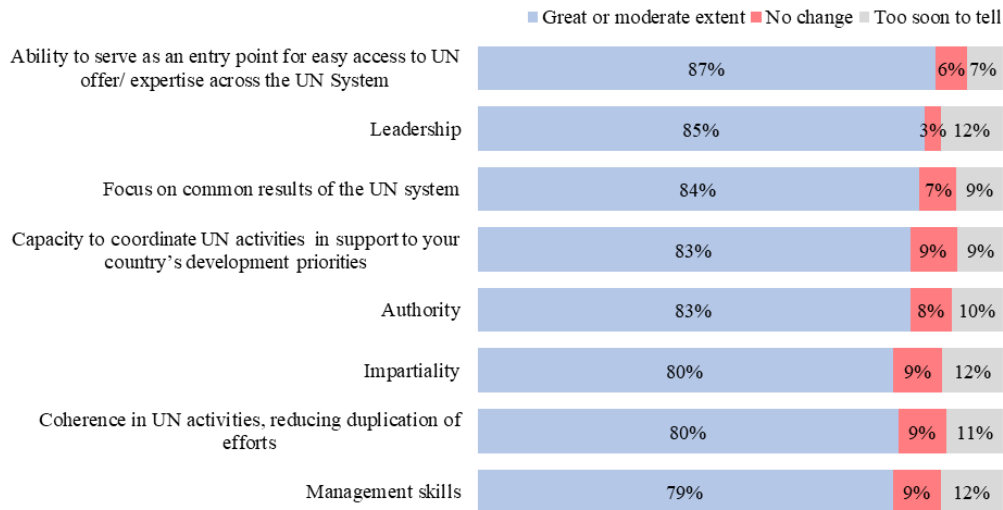
1. Successful leadership by resident coordinators

17. The leadership by Resident Coordinators is pivotal to the success of our collective efforts. I am therefore very encouraged by the continuously positive feedback on their performance. Over 88 per cent of host governments reported that resident coordinators provide effective leadership in respect of strategic support for national plans and priorities. This proportion has remained steady – it was 89 per cent in 2021 and the annual average since the new resident coordinator system was established in 2019 is 86 per cent.
18. When asked to compare the performance of resident coordinators now to the situation before the repositioning, host countries also reported positive changes (see Figure II.1). Indeed, 87 per cent of host countries reported that the resident coordinators are now a more effective entry point to United Nations country support.
19. The perspective of contributing countries is also favorable. Eighty-eight per cent agreed that the resident coordinator system has stepped up collective and coherent action and helped to leverage the comparative advantages of individual entities (see Figure II.2). These results are improvements on last year, the first year of the survey of contributing countries, when only 75 per cent of contributing countries felt that the resident coordinator leveraged the comparative advantages of all entities.
20. Our expectation from the outset was that empowered resident coordinators would be better placed to lead the country team in ways that reduce duplication and generate synergies. There are encouraging signs that this has been the case. Over 77 per cent of host country Governments agreed that the resident coordinator helps to minimize duplication of efforts among United Nations entities and ensure efficient use of resources. This was an increase from 71 per cent in 2021. Meanwhile, 70 per cent of contributing countries reported that there has been a reduction in duplication or overlap among United Nations activities.³ This compares with 68 per cent reporting likewise in 2021.

² General Assembly resolution 76/4 of 2 November 2021.

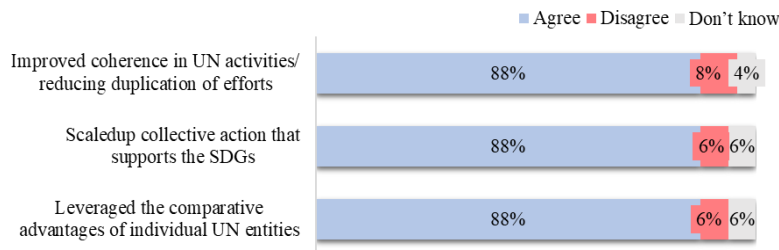
³ Restricted to valid responses without “don’t know”.

Figure II.1
Host country Government responses on resident coordinator strengthening following the repositioning of the United Nations development system



Source: 2022 Department of Economic and Social Affairs survey of Governments.

Figure II.2
Contributing country Government responses on improvements through the new resident coordinator system

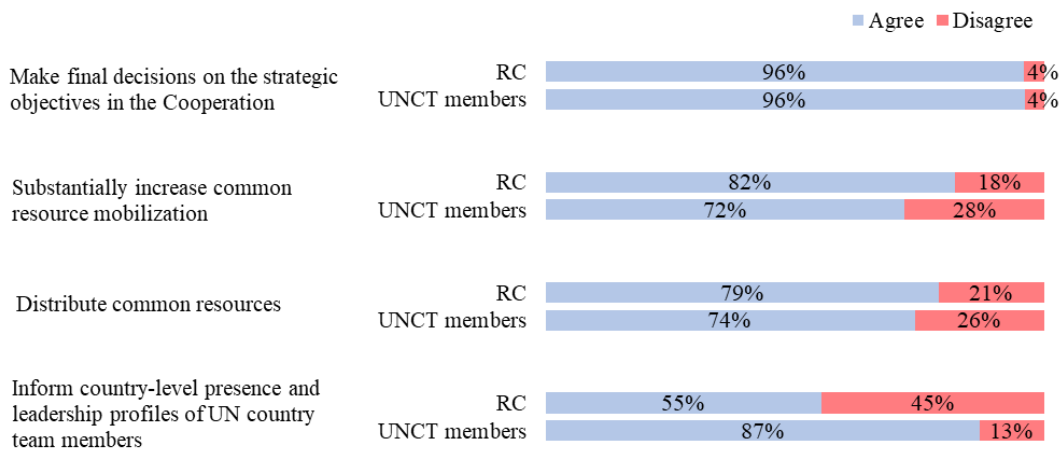


Source: 2022 Department of Economic and Social Affairs survey of Governments.

- Of course, resident coordinators can only live up to the high expectations placed on them if they are appropriately capacitated and empowered. Survey results suggest that this has generally been the case. Most host country Governments agreed that resident coordinators have a sufficient prerogative to fulfil their mandate (82 per cent), up from 76 per cent in 2021. Country team members generally concluded likewise (see figure II.3). However, some specific areas remain problematic. In particular, only 55 per cent of resident coordinators reported that they are sufficiently empowered to help shape the composition and leadership profiles of country team members. This is also feedback we receive regularly from resident coordinators. This ratio was also low last year, at 58 per cent, which was the first year in which the question was asked in the survey; but we expected improvements this year. In addition, few agencies consult Resident Coordinators when selecting their representatives, as required by the Management and Accountability Framework. These findings need attention by Principals in the UNSDG because they suggest that resident coordinators are being constrained in their ability to ensure that the United Nations offer at the country level is well tailored to national needs and priorities. I am asking the UNSDG to work together to ensure that entities fulfil their commitment to consult with resident coordinators when appointing country-level representatives.

22. Efforts to enhance the talent pipeline, the recruitment process and the continued professional development of resident coordinators are generating results already. As examined more fully in the UNSDG Chair’s report, over 90 per cent of surveyed host Governments agreed that the resident coordinator has the right profile and skillsets to support the development priorities of their country. This was the same level as in 2021. Similarly, 91 per cent agreed that the United Nations country team has the right mix of capacities and skills to deliver the required support. This was an improvement from 85 per cent in 2021. More detailed analysis on the leadership by resident coordinators, and additional survey results, are presented in the report of the Chair of the UNSDG.

Figure II.3
Resident coordinator and UN country team member responses on the empowerment of resident coordinators



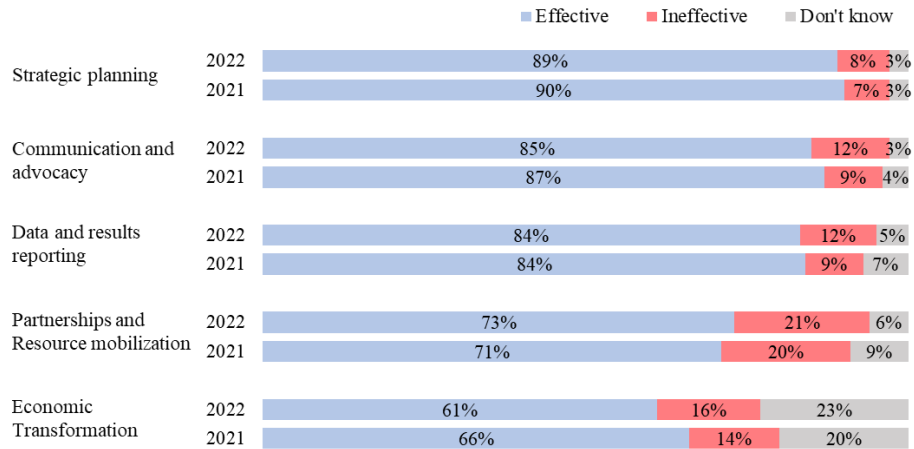
Source: 2022 Department of Economic and Social Affairs surveys of resident coordinators and United Nations country teams.

Abbreviation: RC, resident coordinator; UNCT, United Nations country team.

2. Effective support from resident coordinators’ offices

Adequate support by resident coordinator offices is critical to help resident coordinators to drive collective results at the national level and leverage global and regional expertise in support of the host country. The strengthening and harmonization of core capacities across RCOs has been a key feature of the new resident coordinator system – replacing the previous system where most RCOs were widely understaff and ad hoc structures proliferated according to local arrangements with donors. Our survey of United Nations country teams has identified strengths of these offices as well as areas for improvement (Figure II.4). The report of the Chair of the UNSDG provides more detail on efforts to enhance capacity in resident coordinator’s offices and priorities going forward.

Figure II.4

Resident coordinator office support to United Nations country teams

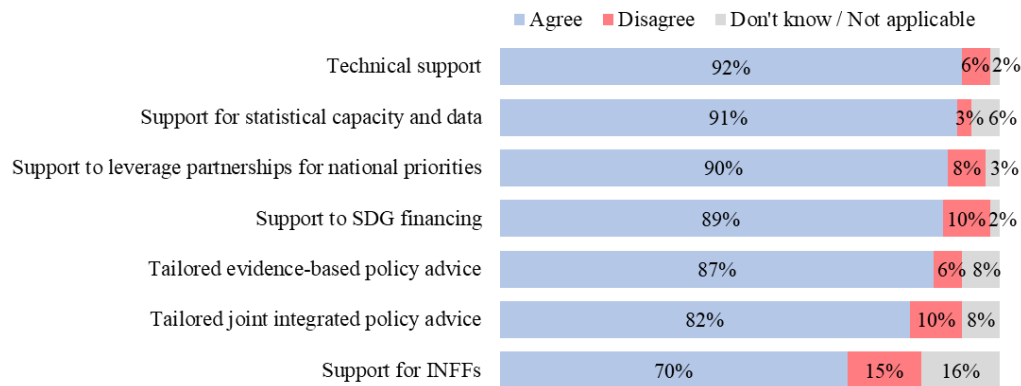
Source: 2022 Department of Economic and Social Affairs survey of United Nations country teams.

3. Integrated support aligned to country needs and priorities

23. United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Frameworks set the development system offer at the country level, in response to national. Ninety-three per cent of host Governments reported that these frameworks are now closely aligned with country development needs and priorities. Ninety-four per cent of Governments also agreed that the United Nations development systems' country-level activities adequately reflect the content of the Cooperation Framework, while 78 per cent of Governments agreed that the United Nations at country level is more focused on common results. Among resident coordinators, 98 per cent stated that they saw improvement in common results over the last twelve months. As detailed more thoroughly in Section IV.B.1 below, countries in special situations report particularly high levels of alignment.
24. Host country governments also provided positive assessments of the United Nations support provided to them. Technical support, support for capacity and data, and support to leverage partnerships for national priorities were all reported as adequate by 90 per cent, or higher, by host governments (figure II.6). The support provided on Integrated National Financing Frameworks was however rated lower – at 70 per cent - which shows that we still have some road ahead in reasserting the role of the United Nations development system in supporting countries leverage financing for the SDGs. I address these efforts in greater detail in Section III.A.

Figure II.6

Government responses to the statement that the provision of United Nations support is adequate in the following areas



Source: 2022 Department of Economic and Social Affairs survey of host country Governments

25. For greater impact and coherence, United Nations entity country programmes should be directly derived from the Cooperation Framework. This is the main difference of Cooperation Frameworks when compared to the predecessor framework UN Development Assistance Frameworks (UNDAF). Progress has been made in this regard, as over 88 per cent of United Nations country team members stated that their country programme document is derived from the Cooperation Framework. However, difficulties in ensuring full derivation remain and the picture varies greatly from country to country. The UNSDG is taking steps to course correct. In addition, the United Nations System-wide Evaluation Office will undertake an evaluation on this matter. The new checklist for entities' governing bodies (see section II.A.5 below) will also support Member States to monitor this important element. I expect to provide greater insight and to identify improvements in my next report on the implementation of the quadrennial policy review.
26. The survey Responses provide indications of which country-level measures implemented as part of the repositioning process are perceived to be most transformative (see figure II.10). Perhaps unsurprisingly, the new UN Cooperation Frameworks and strengthened resident coordinator offices were both considered as essential in improving the UN offer by more than 80 per cent of both country team members and resident coordinators.

Figure II.10

Extent to which different measures improved the United Nations country offer to countries in the last year

| Measure | Resident coordinator responses | | | | UNCT member responses | | | |
|-------------------------------------|--------------------------------|--------------|-----------|------------|--------------------------|--------------|-----------|------------|
| | Great or moderate extent | Small extent | No change | Don't know | Great or moderate extent | Small extent | No change | Don't know |
| Cooperation Framework | 91% | 7% | 2% | 0% | 79% | 9% | 9% | 2% |
| Strengthened RC office | 84% | 11% | 4% | 0% | 64% | 18% | 12% | 6% |
| Common Country Analysis | 83% | 12% | 4% | 0% | 71% | 12% | 13% | 5% |
| Joint Workplans | 82% | 13% | 4% | 0% | 49% | 23% | 17% | 11% |
| More resources managed by RC/UNCTs | 78% | 11% | 11% | 0% | 39% | 33% | 18% | 11% |
| System-wide reporting | 76% | 15% | 9% | 1% | 51% | 23% | 19% | 7% |
| Results groups | 72% | 17% | 10% | 1% | 56% | 20% | 18% | 6% |
| Business Operations Strategy | 66% | 27% | 7% | 0% | 48% | 29% | 11% | 13% |
| Resource mobilization collaboration | 53% | 34% | 13% | 0% | 35% | 38% | 21% | 7% |
| strengthened MAF implementation | 53% | 29% | 16% | 2% | 42% | 23% | 20% | 15% |
| Increased common premises | 50% | 25% | 24% | 0% | 37% | 25% | 28% | 11% |
| Resource mobilization transparency | 50% | 29% | 21% | 0% | 32% | 34% | 23% | 10% |
| Strengthened MAF provisions | 50% | 28% | 20% | 2% | 38% | 22% | 19% | 21% |

Source: 2022 Department of Economic and Social Affairs survey of resident coordinators and United Nations country teams.

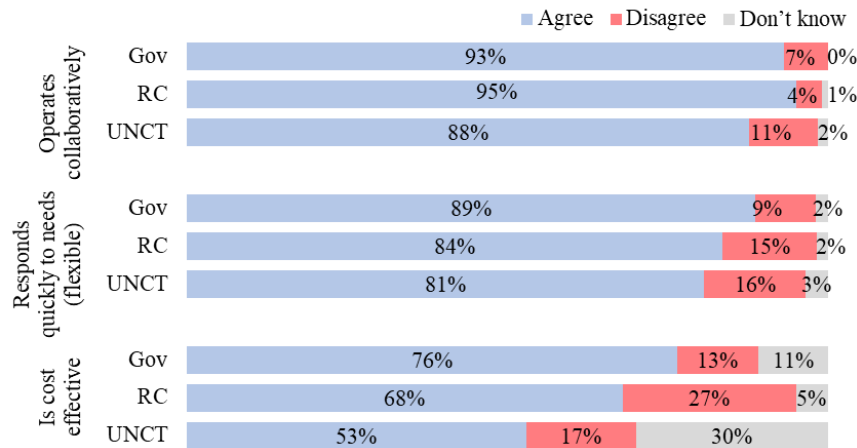
Abbreviations: MAF, management and accountability framework; RC, resident coordinator; UNCT, United Nations country team.

4. Tailored United Nations country team configuration

27. Sustainable development is not amenable to a cookie-cutter approach. The United Nations offer must be needs-based with a country team that is configured to best respond to the demands made by the host government.
28. A capacity assessment methodology, devised by the Development Coordination Office, was rolled out in 2022, as promised in my last report (A/77/69-E/2022/47). By the end of the year, over half [56 per cent] of country teams had conducted configuration exercises that were informed by this methodology.
29. Among host country governments, 87 per cent considered the configuration of United Nations country support to be adequately tailored to meet their challenges and needs. This was an improvement from 81 per cent in 2021. A lower proportion of resident coordinators (81 per cent) and United Nations country team members (85 per cent) agreed. Ninety-six per cent of host country governments reported satisfaction with their engagement in dialogues on configuration. Most governments also agreed their United Nations country team operates collaboratively (93 per cent) and is flexible (89 per cent), each down slightly from 2021 and in line with slightly lower rates from resident coordinators (see figure II.7).

Figure II.7

Government, resident coordinator and United Nations country team responses on in-country presence and configuration



Source: 2022 Department of Economic and Social Affairs surveys of Governments, resident coordinators and United Nations country team members.

Note: Governments were asked about the United Nations in-country presence, while resident coordinators and United Nations country team members were asked about the current United Nations configuration, one component of which is entity presence.

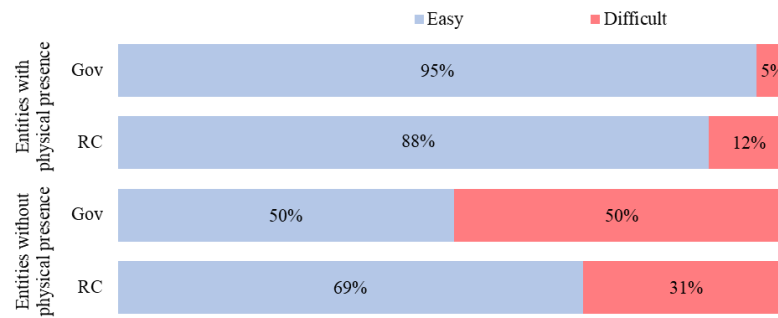
Abbreviations: Gov, Governments; RC, resident coordinators; UNCT, United Nations country teams.

30. Frequently, countries require specialized development expertise that may not be available among entities in country, as recognized by the 2020 quadrennial policy review. Our reforms have indeed endeavored to ensure the development system is able to leverage regional and global assets to scale up country impact. Important steps were made in this regard – and the resident coordinator system has now established connections with specialized entities and regional entities in ways we had not witnessed before. We continue to see a trend of growth in the average number of specialized agency signatories to Cooperation Frameworks without a physical presence – in the last year, it increased from 5.0 to 5.4.⁴ The share of United Nations country teams with members from regional commissions and the World Bank as Cooperation Framework signatories has also moved up. For example, only 38 per cent of country teams had regional commissions as members in 2020. This grew to 48 per cent in 2021 and 60 per cent in 2022. The development system also further strengthened the development offer to countries and territories served by multi-country offices, as more fully detailed in the report of the UNSDG Chair.
31. Yet, host country Governments and resident coordinators continue to find more difficult to access expertise from United Nation entities without a physical presence (figure II.9). Only 50 per cent of host Governments reported that it is easy to access expertise outside their country – surprisingly down from 61 per cent in 2021. With Governments facing unprecedented and multidimensional challenges and finite set of resources to meet these needs, it is imperative that the United Nations development system better leverage the contributions of entities that do not have a physical footprint in country. I expect the UNSDG to accelerate the development of global and regional rosters of expertise (see Section II.B. below), while we also

continue to develop specific agreements between DCO and specialized agencies for targeted support. I will report back on proposed measures at the next quadrennial comprehensive policy review.

Figure II.9

Perspectives of Governments and resident coordinators on accessing technical expertise from entities with and without a physical presence



Source: 2022 Department of Economic and Social Affairs surveys of host country Governments and resident coordinators.

Note: Governments responded to the question: *In general, is it easy or difficult for your country to access technical expertise from UN entities.* Resident Coordinators responded to the question of difficulty for the resident coordinator to access the technical expertise available within the United Nations development system to address national needs priorities and challenges.

Abbreviations: Gov, Governments; RC, resident coordinators.

5. Reinforcing transparency and mutual accountability

32. Transparency and accountability are critical drivers of an effective development system. At the global level, General Assembly resolutions 75/233, 76/4 and 75/290A reaffirmed the primacy of the Economic and Social Council's operational activities segment as the accountability and oversight forum of the United Nations development system. This report and the report of the Chair of the United Nations Development System Group play a key role in enabling the segment to perform this function and monitoring the implementation of the quadrennial comprehensive policy review.
33. In a system that remains marked by fragmented governance, it is imperative that we continue to work together with governing bodies across all entities of the UN development system to maintain the reforms on track and fully respond to the expectations of Member States. There is good momentum. All governing bodies have held, regularly, dedicated sessions on the engagement of the respective entity in the UN development system repositioning – I am grateful to them. The Chair of the UNSDG has now provided the governing bodies, through their Presidents, with a checklist on United Nations development system reform. The checklist will facilitate the oversight by governing bodies of entity-specific efforts and will help ensure a harmonized approach across entities. The checklist is fully aligned with the General Assembly resolution on reforms (72/279). It complements other oversight tools that governing bodies already use to assess entities' implementation of their mandates and obligations. I invite members of all governing bodies and Heads of respective entities to make full use of the checklist and provide regular updates on implementation to the Economic and Social Council at the operational activities segment.
34. Accountability at the global level needs to be well articulated with accountability at the regional and national levels – it is at country level, in particular, where our main accountability lies. At the national

level, there are two primary accountability mechanisms. First, national joint steering committees co-chaired with host Governments enable collective country-level oversight of the implementation of the Cooperation Framework. Eighty-four per cent of countries (76 of 91) with new generation cooperation frameworks have established such committees and 76 per cent (58 of 76) met in 2022. In addition, country teams are required to account for country-level results in the implementation of the Cooperation Framework to host governments in annual reports coordinated by the resident coordinator's office. In 2022, all Country Teams produced a report on results achieved in 2021 to their host Governments, while 99 percent had produced reports in 2021 on 2020 results.

35. Second, country teams are now accountable to Resident Coordinators on their support to the 2030 Agenda, through the Management and Accountability Framework. The direction of travel on this Framework is sound and most resident coordinators (84 per cent) and country team members (80 per cent) agreed that the implementation of the framework has improved over the past year. Resident coordinators and country team members also confirmed that most country team members report to the resident coordinator on entity results and activities (figure II.11). On the other hand, over half of resident coordinators (57 per cent) reported only providing formal inputs to the performance assessments of fewer than one third of entity heads. This is consistent with feedback from country teams, with 38 per cent of entities reporting that the resident coordinator is included in their performance appraisals. On the positive side, 74 per cent now report that their job description includes provisions related to their relationship with the resident coordinator. I ask UNSDG entities to continue to monitor and ensure full compliance of the Management and Accountability Framework. I also encourage governing boards to remain appraised, including through the reform's checklist.
36. Regional-level results are reported annually to Governments through the Regional Collaborative Platforms', including through its system-wide regional results report. Such reports had never been produced before the reforms and are an important milestone in ensuring a more transparent system-wide effort at the regional level. These are discussed more fully in Section II.B. below.

Figure II.11

UN country team member reporting to the resident coordinator to meet coordination needs

| Reporting on | Resident Coordinators | | | | United Nations country team members | |
|---|-----------------------|------|-----|------|-------------------------------------|-----|
| | All | Most | Few | None | Yes | No |
| Collective results based on the CF | 24% | 60% | 12% | 4% | 87% | 13% |
| Entity-specific activities relevant to Cooperation Framework results | 14% | 57% | 28% | 1% | 89% | 11% |
| Entity-led Cooperation Framework programme implementation performance | 15% | 57% | 24% | 5% | 87% | 13% |
| Resource mobilization | 7% | 33% | 51% | 8% | 65% | 35% |

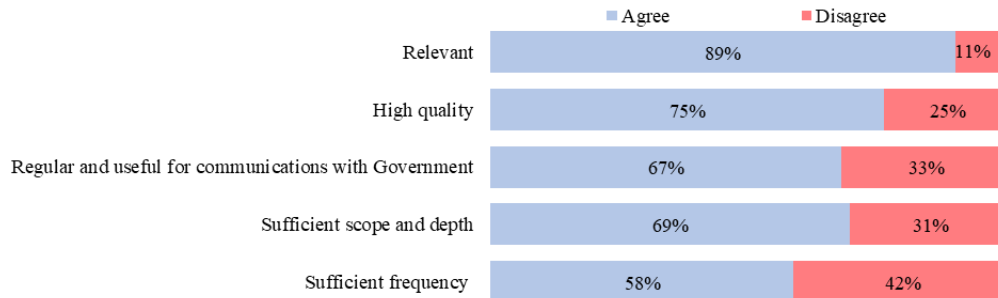
Source: 2022 Department of Economic and Social Affairs survey of resident coordinators and United Nations country teams.

Notes: Resident coordinators response to question "Do all UNCT members report to the Resident Coordinator regularly to meet your coordination needs?"; United Nations country team members response to the question "Do you report regularly to the Resident Coordinator?":

Figure II.12

Quality of reporting by United Nations country team members to the resident coordinator

Resident coordinator response to the question: In general, the reporting that the Resident Coordinator receives from UN country team heads is of:



Source: 2022 Department of Economic and Social Affairs survey of resident coordinators.

B. Ensuring regional support accelerated SDG progress

37. Regional Collaborative Platforms (RCPs) are designed to deploy regional assets in support of country action, supporting and reinforcing an integrated response by the country teams. RCPs also play a key role in helping country teams to address cross-border development issues, at the demand of respective governments. These platforms are now well established. Exchanges between the regional and country level as well as collaboration among the RCP membership around collective priorities have become more systematic, and increasingly focused on ensuring regional assets are deployed in support of country teams. Mobilization for, and follow up to, commitments made at global high-level events such as the Transforming Education Summit and COP 27 was a key aspect of their support.
38. Annual reports are now produced systematically by RCPs, and provide a comprehensive picture of the work of the UN development system in each region. The paragraphs below provide a brief overview of key activities in each region.
39. The Africa RCP advanced four agreed regional priorities: data and statistics, climate action, macroeconomic transformation, and energy and digital transitions. The RCP worked closely with the African Union, simultaneously advancing the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063. On climate, the RCP supported Member States on Just Energy Transitions in the Africa context and adoption of the AU Common Position on Energy Access and Just Energy Transitions. RCP members also supported operationalization of the Transforming Education Summit through national consultations and monitoring under the Continental Education Strategy for Africa (CESA).
40. In the Arab States region, the RCP supported a focus on the transition from learning to work for adolescents and young people. A regional High-Level Meeting, facilitated by the RCP, allowed the exchange of best practice and national commitments to boost employment opportunities for young people. A key outcome from the meeting was the sharing of joint recommendations from the Arab region to the Transforming Education Summit, and channeling support to country-level follow-up. The RCP also rolled out a social protection capacity development programme for policy makers and practitioners.

41. The RCP for Asia-Pacific provided analysis and guidance to Resident Coordinators and country teams in the lead up to COP 27 and the Transforming Education Summit. In Papua New Guinea, the Issue-Based Coalition (IBC) on resilience provided tailored training to integrate disaster risk reduction and climate adaptation into the new Cooperation Framework. In the Maldives, the IBC conducted a capacity diagnosis to inform the country's disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation strategy. Similarly, country teams in Nepal and the Philippines were supported on digital transformation.
42. In Europe and Central Asia, the RCP's IBC on Environment and Climate Change lent support to resident coordinators and country teams on water cooperation in Central Asia. The RCP also prepared a mapping of projects to support inter-agency coordination at regional and country levels.
43. The RCP for Latin America and the Caribbean supported country teams with technical expertise in the formulation of Cooperation Frameworks in Haiti, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Costa Rica, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, and Venezuela. The IBC on Climate Change and Resilience facilitated a coherent, country-level approach to the increasing intensity of wildfires. The IBC on Human Mobility issued regular reports that compile and analyze key trends on human mobility flows, including profiles, routes and the risks faced by persons on the move, and supported the formulation of targeted policy responses.
44. There is no doubt has been progress compared to the duplicative and somewhat opaque structures that existed before the reforms. All RCPs have gradually demonstrated their potential in driving greater integration and expertise in support of UN country teams. For instance, the proportion of resident coordinators who report that the RCPs have supported the country team in terms of SDG monitoring and reporting increased from 41 per cent in 2021 to 54 per cent in 2022.
45. However, we are not yet at a stage where we can consider our regional architecture as optimal. It is worrying to me that only a small majority of Resident Coordinators assess that their country team has benefitted from the technical expertise (57%) and normative and policy expertise (48%) from the Regional Collaborative Platforms. It is also concerning that the UN country team perceptions of UN support from RCPs deteriorated compared with 2021. and while 75 per cent of Resident Coordinators reported that their country team had benefitted from support of the RCP in policy discussion and exchange of experiences only 61 per cent of country team members reported moderate or great benefits.⁶
46. As we are nearing the halfway point for the SDGs, more action will be required from all members of the Regional Collaborative Platforms to continue to identify entry points for the regional level to collectively connect global instruments and advocacy with country-level reality by enabling and supporting transformative action that accelerates implementation of the 2030 Agenda. Between February and April 2023, the Deputy Secretary-General engaged with regional directors in all regions, as Chair of the RCPs, to discuss corrective measures and accelerate alignment to expectations of countries as channeled by UN country teams and resident coordinators. This year will be a litmus test for the new regional architecture and whether it is indeed fit for purpose to deliver the impact we need to meet the 2030 goalpost. Deploying our regional assets in an optimal way, including through the consolidation of regional rosters of expertise, remains a key priority on which the UN development system is yet to make headways.

⁵ The proportion of country team members who reported that they benefited to a great or moderate extent in terms of technical expertise fell from 45 per cent in 2021 to 40 per cent in 2022. These ratios fell from 43 to 40 per cent over the same period in respect of normative and policy support.

⁶ In 2021, 71 per cent of resident coordinators and 62 per cent of country team members reported likewise.

C. Boosting sustainable development as humanity’s ultimate prevention tool: strengthening humanitarian-development collaboration and linkages to peace

47. Development gains are usually among the first casualties when conflict breaks out. The number of conflicts has spiked over the last decade. One quarter of the global population now lives in conflict-affected areas. Around 89.3 million have been forcibly displaced by conflict, violence, persecution and human rights violations – more than double the number since 2012 – including 27.1 million forced to leave their countries.⁷ Humanitarian needs are skyrocketing with an estimated 339 million people worldwide expected to require emergency aid and protection in 2023. This is an increase of 65 million people from 2022.
48. Inclusive sustainable development is the only comprehensive solution to prevent – or accelerate the transition out of - conflict and emergencies. This is why the 2020 quadrennial comprehensive policy review recognized the importance of a greater cooperation and coherence among development efforts, humanitarian action and peacebuilding.
49. Thanks to the repositioning of the UN development system, we are better positioned to respond to this important call. The new resident coordinator system, in particular, has created significant opportunities for greater synergies – a more impartial development coordination function, at the heart of the Secretariat, has established a clear interlocutor to OCHA and the peace pillar for collaboration at all levels. Better equipped resident coordinator offices have allowed for cross-fertilization with humanitarian and peace activities, in specific country contexts where these challenges intersect. The Joint Steering Committee for humanitarian and development collaboration, led by OCHA and UNDP, has continued to provide dedicated attention to crisis settings, with sustainable development as the ultimate objective.
50. Our survey results are encouraging. Between 90 and 95 per cent of host countries see United Nations entities as working in close collaboration across humanitarian, development and peacebuilding actions (see figure II.13). Some 95 per cent of host governments agreed that, in 2022, resident coordinators have contributed to building stronger synergies across these interventions. The share rises to 100 per cent in countries with a Humanitarian Response Plan. These assessments represent steady increases over the past two years.⁸ In countries engaged in peacebuilding in recent years, 93 per cent of respondents positively assessed United Nations efforts to ensure a continued focus on longer-term development and sustaining peace, up from 91 per cent the previous year.
51. Resident Coordinators offered a similar assessment of collaboration across humanitarian and development initiatives as well as development and peacebuilding actions. Collaboration on humanitarian and peacebuilding interventions is weaker, although a positive trend is observed. The assessment of United Nations country teams is less favourable (Figure II.13– which may signal an increased appetite for greater collaboration at a time where the world faces multiple crisis. Headquarters need to be prepared to seize this momentum and respond effectively. I have therefore asked the Chair of the UNSDG to continue to work with UN Principals in identifying ways to strengthen support in this field, including through a review of the working modalities of the Joint Steering Committee for humanitarian and development cooperation. As a

⁷ UNHCR data, <https://www.unhcr.org/en-us/figures-at-a-glance.html>

⁸ In 2021, 93 per cent of host country governments agreed that resident coordinators have contributed to building stronger synergies across these interventions, while 94 per cent of host country governments with humanitarian response plans thought so. In 2020, these ratios were 88 per cent and 100 per cent, respectively, in 2020.

matter of priority, we must identify ways to deliver surge capacities to support coordinated planning and joint programming by UN country teams in a flexible and fast-tracked manner.

Figure II.13

Ongoing work to bridge humanitarian, development and peacebuilding activities

Percentage of Governments, country team members and resident coordinators reporting close collaboration in the following areas:

| Survey | Year | Development – Humanitarian | Development – Peacebuilding | Humanitarian – Peacebuilding |
|--------------------------|------|----------------------------|-----------------------------|------------------------------|
| Host country governments | 2022 | 93% | 91% | 90% |
| | 2021 | .. | .. | .. |
| Resident Coordinators | 2022 | 94% | 90% | 80% |
| | 2021 | 89% | 84% | 76% |
| UN country team members | 2022 | 80% | 66% | 72% |
| | 2021 | 83% | 75% | 75% |

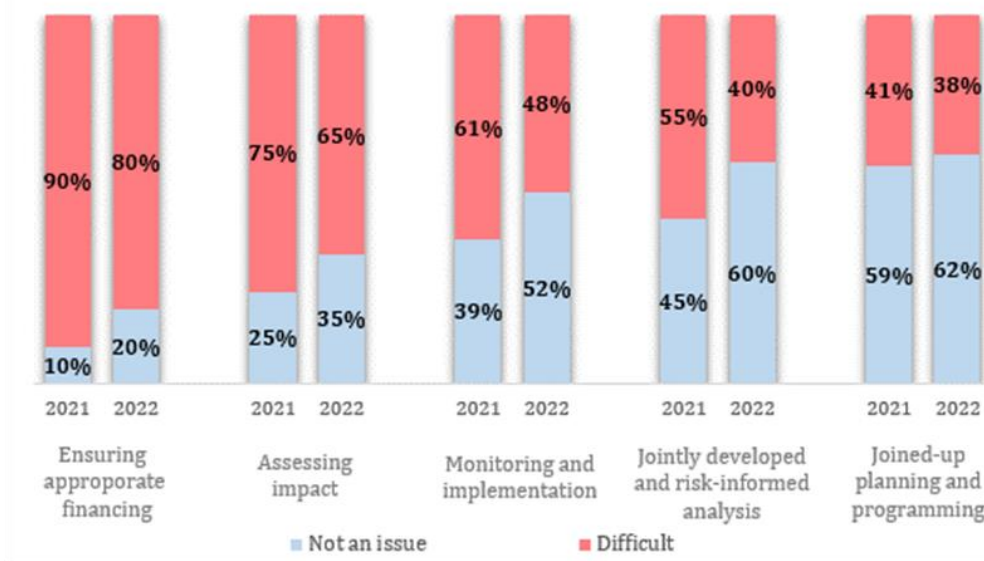
Source: 2022 and 2021 Department of Economic and Social Affairs surveys of resident coordinators and United Nations country team members.

52. Assessing the structural bottlenecks to collaboration between different pillars and activities, I am encouraged to see observe reductions in difficulties in all five areas assessed by the survey (figure II.14). However, significant challenges remain, many of which are systematic in nature – including the lack of financing incentives and insufficient investments in sustainable development to prevent or when crisis erupt.
53. In our survey of the headquarters of United Nations entities, 85 per cent of respondents reported significant difficulties in ensuring appropriate financing. There is good news in this regard. Funding to inter-agency pooled funds focused on peace and transition have risen, from \$184 million in 2015 to \$546 million in 2021. The Peacebuilding Fund, in particular, continues to make a crucial contribution to greater coherence across the United Nations system. In 2022, it approved an all-time high budget of \$231.5 million for 37 countries – an 18.7 per cent increase from 2021. At the same time, I am concerned that the new contributions provided to the Peacebuilding Fund declined by 12 per cent in 2022 - to a total of \$171 million - which may signal that the current positive trend is unlikely to be sustained over time.
54. Difficulties in assessing impact with precision were also identified as a persistent hurdle. The combined effect of humanitarian, development and peace interventions to meet needs, reduce vulnerabilities and mitigate risk, bring many variables across different actors and different reporting frameworks together in contexts of great risk and uncertainty. Assessing impact is a complex and uncertain endeavour; nonetheless, we must find ways to improve reporting in this regard. There is effort ongoing to ensure better alignment of analysis, planning and monitoring tools across pillars and this offers a good entry point for tangible improvement moving forward.

Figure II.14

Ongoing work to bridge humanitarian, development and peacebuilding activities

Question: please assess the level of difficulty with each of the following aspects:



Source: 2022 and 2021 Department of Economic and Social Affairs surveys of United Nations headquarters entities

55. I also count on continued leadership by Member States to identify opportunities to strengthen intergovernmental emphasis on issues that require collaboration between humanitarian and development, and stronger linkages to peace. In this regard, joint work by the General Assembly, the Economic and Social Council, the Security Council and the Peacebuilding Commission remains essential to strengthening coherence across the pillars. I am also pleased that the reconfigured meeting of the Economic and Social Council on the transition from relief to development now allows dedicated discussion on UN system support to countries affected by conflicts and facing humanitarian crisis. It can also build on the annual meetings of the Economic and Social Council and the Peacebuilding Commission. Working together, we can accelerate progress and make sure the UN development system is able to leverage assets across all pillars to help countries achieve the SDGs. In doing so, we will be a step closer to our joint aspirations for a world of peace, dignity and prosperity.

D. Accelerating the transformation of business operations

56. We have come a long way together. The collective efforts of Member States and UNSDG entities to reform the business operations of the United Nations development system have achieved a great deal. We have created a powerful platform to share resources and staff more easily in ways that realize tangible business efficiencies. Our latest estimates, as detailed further below, identify realized efficiency gains of 405 million USD.⁹ This is a 47 per cent increase from 2021 efficiencies (275 million USD), applying the revised, more

⁹ UNDS Repositioning- Explanatory Note #10, 29 March 2019

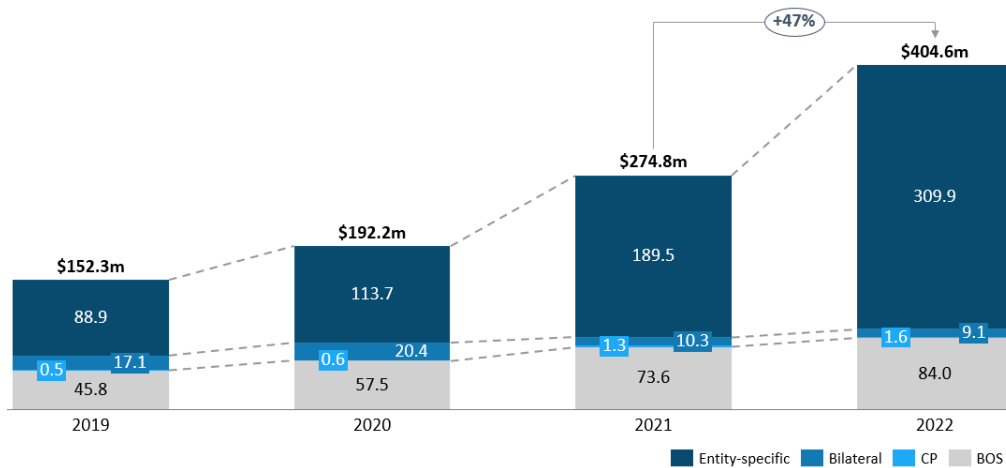
comprehensive UNSDG methodology.¹⁰ These are encouraging numbers. While efficiencies are not an end in itself, every dollar saved through more efficient operations translates into an additional dollar allocated to development activities. This is why these efforts are so critical.

57. The improvements in business operations have primarily been achieved in four areas: business operations strategies, establishing common premises, global shared services and Common Back Offices.
58. The implementation of country-level Business Operations Strategies (BOS) saw efficiency gains of US\$84 million in 2022 (up 14% from the \$73.6 million in 2021), with administrative services continuing to generate the largest efficiency gains. This includes, for example, the consolidation of security services for staff and premises at the country level (\$5.5 million); joint travel services (\$9.2 million); and collaboration on accommodation services (\$13.3 million). The UN country teams in Syria, Yemen, and Afghanistan account for the 27% of the total BOS efficiencies, generating \$12.3 million, \$5.6 million, and \$4.9 million in efficiencies, respectively.
59. As of March 2023, 30% of United Nations premises are common premises, accommodating 55% of the UN personnel, as compared to 26% of common premises accommodating 45% of staff in 2021. This progress includes an increase in colocation of offices in a common premise (as in Lebanon, Belize, Tanzania, Barbados), as well as creation of new common premises, as well as 25 ongoing projects, including several Government-provided rent-free buildings (as in Senegal, Egypt, Fiji, Micronesia, Gabon). Together these efforts yielded a total of \$1.6 million in efficiencies (compared to 1.3 million in 2021).
60. The establishment of common premises is also a powerful enabler for other efficiency-related initiatives, such as the Business Operations Strategies and the Common Back Office. In Viet Nam¹¹ for example, the Common Premises hosted by UNDP, which accommodates 15 entities, enabled additional integrated ICT support functions and facility management services to be shared among several entities, further creating a culture of collaboration within the team. A fundamental challenge to accelerating progress in this area remains the lack of resources for significant infrastructure improvements. Moreover, progress has been achieved in increasing accountability and transparency of results through new Common Premises platform and dashboard (containing information for over 3,500 premises worldwide spanning 3.8million m² and accommodation for 120,000 UN personnel).
61. System-wide progress across implementation of Common Back Offices (CBO) remained slow, however, with regards to the original ambition to set up CBOs for all United Nations country teams. Progress was made primarily with respect to the CBO design methodology being agreed within the UNSDG and the governance and support mechanisms needed to effect potentially fundamental changes in business models at the country level. Progress on Global Shared Services (GSS) was primarily (99%) from entity-specific efficiencies of 156.4 million, as reported by WHO, WFP, UNICEF, UNOPS among others, rather than system-wide savings.

¹⁰ Last year's report presented a total of 195 million in efficiency gains, against a projection of 310 million USD. A comprehensive review of the methodology used to calculate efficiency gains was undertaken by the UNSDG Business Innovation Group, which found that the 2021 data did not fully capture the impact of initiatives that had begun before 2018 but still continue to deliver efficiencies today (for example, accommodation services in Syria and travel services in Ethiopia). Accordingly, a revised and more accurate methodology was developed, which recalculates efficiency gains for 2021 to be 275 million USD. The 2022 estimates apply this revised methodology.

¹¹ More details on Viet Nam results available at: shorturl.at/KLZ39

Figure 1
Comparison of efficiencies (2019 – 2022) using revised methodology



62. With a view to accelerate progress across all workstreams, informed by implementation experience to date, the UNSDG prepared a revised Efficiency Roadmap for 2022-2024, retaining the original ambition but prioritizing areas with the highest potential for efficiencies and introducing quantified, measurable targets. Concrete timelines are now set for the implementation of Business Operations Strategies, with a focus on expanding shared services in conflict and high-risk settings. There is a focus on scaling up of Common Premises in 66 of the highest cost locations globally. For Common Back Offices, the roadmap prioritizes their implementation in 50 of the highest volume, non-crisis settings. The Roadmap introduces significantly higher attention to Global Shared Services, estimating that these could account for 40 percent of total efficiency gains during the 2022-2024 period.
63. As a result, there has been visible progress with respect to CBOs in a first set of countries – Kenya, Tanzania, Brazil, Viet Nam, Senegal and Jordan, where the work will be completed in the course of 2023. As a next step, the UNSDG agreed in January 2023 on further acceleration measures for these countries, identifying lead entities to provide services for each: UNON in Kenya, WFP in Tanzania, UNICEF in Senegal and Jordan (the latter together with UNOPS) and UNDP in Viet Nam and Brazil. The lessons learned from these countries will inform continued adjustments and simplification to enable an increase in momentum to cover a much larger number of countries going forward.
64. To enable momentum across the system, beyond those internal to different entities, the UNSDG has also agreed to invest additional resources for dedicated capacities to be hosted in the Development Coordination Office. In 2023, there will be a focus on initially scaling up services that show the highest potential and readiness, including the UN Fleet focused on vehicle leasing, UN Booking Hub focused on accommodation and medical services, UN Web Buy Plus focused on procurement services, and UNS Vehicle Procurement. For example, the UN Fleet service (managed by UNHCR and WFP) offers field-ready standard vehicles through flexible leasing arrangements, vehicle tracking, and vehicle disposal, and was signed by WFP, UNHCR, UNFPA and UNICEF in 2022.
65. We have said it before, mutual recognition of policies and procedures across UN entities is a key enabler to advance system-wide efficiencies, by removing obstacles posed by differences in entity-specific policies and procedures. Despite the Mutual Recognition Principle statement having been signed by all UNSDG Principals in 2021 (except WIPO, which joined the UNSDG more recently). I am calling on Principals to make a more systematic use of this transformative tool, which remains severely underutilized.

66. Another key enabler is the methodology to capture and report on efficiencies, and 2022 also saw a consolidation of our efforts in this respect. According to the 2022 DESA survey of the UN development system entities headquarters, 44 per cent of entities now have policies in place to measure efficiency gains, an improvement from 33 per cent in 2020. A total of 125 UN country teams updated their Business Operations Strategy in 2023 to inform this report, compared to only 26 last year. The new efficiency dashboard is now publicly available,¹² which includes the results presented in this report as well as previous years, in addition to the new Common Premises platform and dashboard.
67. Despite these achievements and increasingly palpable commitment demonstrated by UNSDG members, there is room for more ambition. The DESA survey found that 30 per cent of development system headquarters do not have internal structures to support the development and implementation of the business operations reform initiatives. I have directed the UNSDG Chair to work with UNSDG entities to address this gap.

E. Delivering global priorities for UN development system operations

68. The 2020 quadrennial comprehensive policy review placed a focus on several areas related to the United Nations' performance against critical corporate commitments.

1. Walking the talk – systemwide accountability on gender

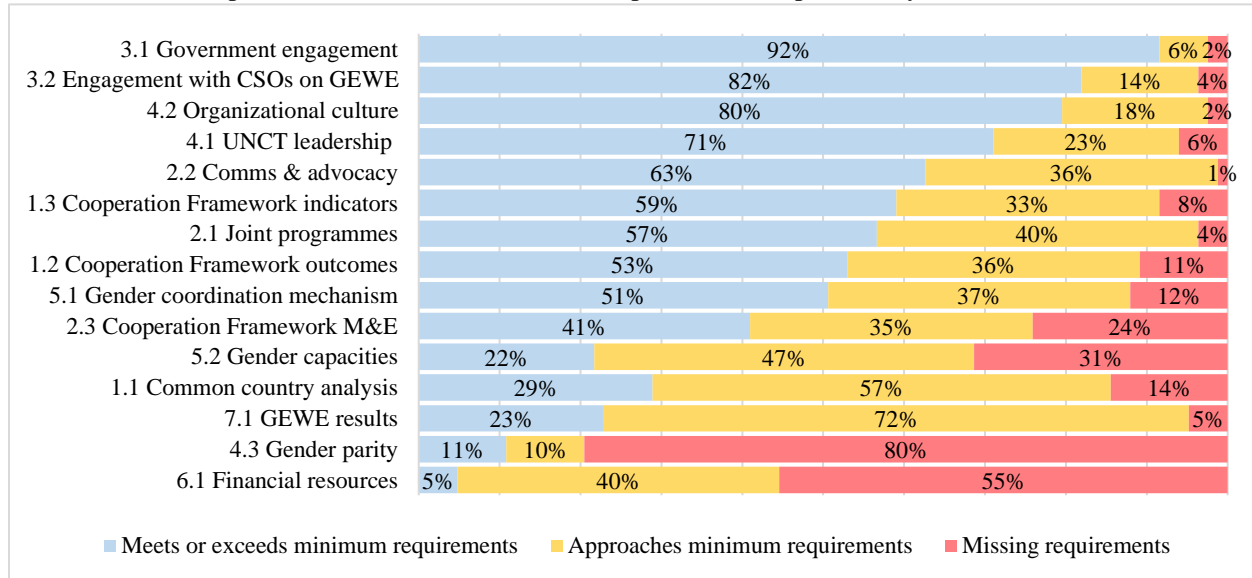
69. The 2020 quadrennial comprehensive policy review called on the United Nations development system entities to continue to promote gender equality and women's rights by enhancing gender mainstreaming. This included the full implementation of the System-wide Action Plan on Gender Equality (UN-SWAP) and its United Nations country team performance indicators (UNCT SWAP "scorecard"). Progress on the UN SWAP is generally encouraging. Reporting was undertaken through a dedicated [online platform](#) with quality assurance provided by the secretariats of UN-SWAP and UNCT-SWAP.
70. UN-SWAP analysis also reveals enhanced systemwide coherence. Some 51 entities paired up for peer review, mutual learning opportunities and other forms of collaboration. Financial resource tracking and allocation has progressed with 30 entities using the UN GEM, 17 on their entire budgets and 13 on specific sources, and 41 establishing a benchmark. Remarkably, twelve entities reported exceeding their benchmarks.
71. This progress is mirrored by advances at the country level. Some 76 country teams implemented the System-wide Action Plan gender equality Scorecard (UNCT-SWAP Scorecard). Seventy per cent per cent of entities met at least 75 per cent of all UN-SWAP indicators (a five percentage-point increase from 2021). Fifty-eight entities now have a gender policy in place, 32 have placed a high-level gender-related result in their strategic plan.
72. Across the country teams three indicators registered the strongest performance: collaboration and engagement with the government on gender equality, organizational culture supportive of gender equality, and collaboration and engagement with civil society organizations dedicated to gender equality. Indicators on advancing gender parity, ensuring financial resource allocation and tracking, and capacity development for gender mainstreaming registered the weakest performance. While encouraging to see greater engagement with government and civil society in advancing gender equality, and greater collaboration

¹² https://data.uninfo.org/home/_Effstatus

internally, without the dedicated resources and capacity, we will not advance at the pace needed to achieve this goal.

Figure VI.

UNCT-SWAP performance: UNCT SWAP Comprehensive report analysis from 2019 to 2022



Source: UN-Women, 2022.

- 73. Our Common Agenda spells out a vision for placing women and girls at the centre of renewed, inclusive multilateralism. To achieve this, the United Nations must be fit for purpose to advance women’s rights and gender equality as a key global priority across all areas of operations. To inform the reforms needed towards this goal, in 2022 I commissioned an independent review of United Nations capacities on gender equality across all pillars. The report was concluded at the start of 2023 and will now be taken forward by the System to address the findings and recommendations.
- 74. Gender parity remains a work in progress and I remain committed to the goal of achieving parity at every level in every entity by 2028. A critical step towards gender parity is transforming our organizational culture.¹³ In this regard, I commend the improved parental leave policy adopted by the UN General Assembly in December 2022. While progress has been significant towards gender parity in the past five years, imbalances persist, particularly in the field. This will be an area of focus for my office in the coming period, and I encourage the United Nations development system and every entity to fast-track action to achieve the goal of parity at all levels, in particular in staff in the field.

2. Consolidating efforts to prevent sexual exploitation and abuse in the UN development system

- 75. Resident coordinators bear the primary responsibility for prohibiting, deterring and responding to sexual misconduct. This is set out in the Management and Accountability Framework. My Special Coordinator on improving the United Nations response to sexual exploitation and abuse and the UN Victims’ Rights Advocate regularly brief resident coordinators on their role and accountability for preventing and

¹³ SG/SM/21627.

responding to sexual exploitation and abuse. Among UN country teams in 2022, 89 per cent (117 out of 131) had a PSEA action plan; 54 per cent had a PSEA coordinator, up from 24 per cent in 2021; and 99 per cent had inter-agency task forces, coordination mechanisms and/or focal points. These are critical steps towards achieving 100 per cent on all these measures by 2024.

76. How we address sexual abuse operationally, including in mainstreaming victims' rights throughout the system, is an essential part of ending sexual exploitation and abuse. I appreciate the leadership of the UN Victims' Rights Advocate in integrating a victims' rights approach in policies and procedures across the UN system. In 2023, consultations on a draft victims' rights statement will be completed and new methodologies piloted to gather victims' feedback on the quality and appropriateness of assistance. Training packages for staff are also being rolled out and will help enhance familiarity with new PSEA measures and reporting mechanisms.

3. Accelerating the environmental sustainability of UN operational activities for development

77. The United Nations Strategy for Sustainability Management 2020-2030 guides the environmental sustainability of our operations. The latest Greening the Blue Report, which includes data from 29 UN development system entities, showed that the United Nations system's carbon footprint decreased from approximately 1.5 million tons CO₂eq in 2020 to 1.2 million tons CO₂eq in 2021. Waste use fell from 184 kg/person to 110 kg/person, and the share of entities implementing sustainable procurement policies rose from 64 per cent in 2020 to 74 per cent in 2021.¹⁴ As of 2021, only 4% of the water consumed by the UN system was recycled. In 2023, guided by the United Nations Common Approach to Biodiversity and Nature Based Solutions, we will pilot entity-level reporting related to biodiversity and nature-based solutions, in procurement, operations, facilities, staff awareness, meetings and events.¹⁵
78. United Nations entities should accelerate efforts to establish environmental management systems while making real-time improvements. Our latest data indicates that out of 27 UN development system entities, only two have an environmental management system that met the minimum requirements of the UN Sustainability Strategy, and 12 are approaching the requirements. Eleven have greenhouse gas reduction targets integrated into their environmental management system, and 15, down from 17 in 2020, have integrated environmental and social safeguards into policies, programmes and projects. We must stay focused and achieve our goal of implementing environmental and social safeguards across the United Nations by 2030.

4. Mainstreaming disability inclusion

79. The 2020 quadrennial comprehensive policy review also called for the United Nations development system to accelerate the full and effective mainstreaming of disability inclusion, utilizing the comprehensive system-wide framework and associated indicators established in the United Nations Disability Inclusion Strategy.
80. I am not satisfied with our progress on disability inclusion. Entities and country teams are not yet achieving 70 per cent of all benchmarks set by the Strategy. Progress must move at greater pace through a

¹⁴ United Nations, "Greening the Blue Report", 2021; United Nations, "Greening the Blue Report", 2022.

¹⁵ Geneva Environment Network, "The UN System's Environment Footprint. Presenting the findings of the UN Greening the Blue Report.", video, 9 February 2023, available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TWWhFeKH1st0>

coordinated and cross-functional approach. The mainstreaming of disability inclusion in strategic planning processes by entities and country teams is steadily increasing, with 49 per cent of entities and 43 per cent of country teams reporting meeting or exceeding requirements. Yet consultation with persons with disabilities remains stagnant. Such consultations are foundational to achieving disability inclusion. Yet only 30 per cent of entities and 29 per cent of country teams are meeting or exceeding requirements.

81. In relation to accessibility, 44 per cent of entities are developing and implementing action plans to address physical and digital accessibility. Forty-six per cent of country teams have adopted disability-inclusive common services in their business operations strategies.
82. Enhancing staff knowledge on disability inclusion is vital to mainstreaming disability inclusion across both programmes and operations. Staff training programmes on disability inclusion were developed with the United Nations System Staff College for use across entities. Networks are now in place to support information exchange, collaboration and learning at entity and country team levels.
83. The multi-partner trust fund of the United Nations Partnership on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities launched 26 joint programmes in 2022, and are being carried out jointly by governments, organizations of persons with disabilities and United Nations entities. Two thirds of the 35 joint programmes on integrated social protection under the Joint SDG Fund also provided specific attention to persons with disabilities.

III. Scaling up support to advance means of implementation for the 2030 Agenda

A. A significant boost in financing for development

84. Upon the adoption of the SDGs, all actors recognized that the transformative vision embodied in the 2030 Agenda would require an unprecedentedly high level of resources to be achieved. Over 7 years have passed, and the shift “from billions to trillions” is still to materialize. It remains imperative, and not too late, to deliver on this promise.
85. It is against this bedrock, that the quadrennial comprehensive policy review requested the development system to continue supporting countries to leverage robust partnerships with development partners, including international financial institutions and the private sector, to achieve the scale and pace of progress required to meet the 2030 Agenda. The United Nations has worked at every level – from the global to the local – to this end.
86. At the global level, I have called for an SDG Stimulus of at least 500 USD billion per year for sustainable development. The SDG Stimulus contains three areas for immediate action within the existing international financial architecture: (1) tackling the high cost of debt and rising risks of debt distress; (2) massively scaling up of affordable long-term financing for development; and (3) expanding contingency financing to countries in need. In parallel, longer-term efforts are needed to reform the international financial architecture. We need a system that better provides equitable, affordable and stable financing for investment in productive capacity, and long-term sustainable development.
87. At the country level, Resident Coordinators have deployed their convening power, systematically, to help countries leverage financing at scale. There are encouraging signs – including regarding cooperation with multilateral development banks. Ninety-seven per cent of host governments agreed that country teams engage meaningfully with international financial institutions, an increase from 90 per cent in 2021. Sixty-six per cent indicated a noticeable improvement in collaboration since 2018. Engagement with international

financial institutions in preparing common country analyses increased from 54 per cent to 62 per cent from 2021 to 2022. UNDP, UNFPA, UNICEF, UNOPS and UN Women have projects with international financial institutions in over 110 countries.¹⁶

88. Despite these improvements, only 38 per cent of UN country teams reported having a formal relationship with international financial institutions and 31 per cent reported joint initiatives with these institutions in 2022, a decrease of 11 per cent since 2021. Eighty-nine per cent of host country Governments agreed that the United Nations provides adequate support to financing for the SDGs. But this proportion has to approach closer to one hundred per cent if we are to realize the step change in finance needed to rescue the sustainable development goals. Our performance also varies across sectors. In health, for instance, only 66 per cent of host governments report receiving support on finance for health, compared with 91 per cent who received support on improving health coverage
89. Moreover, as noted in Section III.A, the support provided by the United Nations on Integrated National Financing Frameworks has room to improve. The INFFs are a critical tool. These Frameworks facilitate collaboration between United Nations entities, the government, international financial institutions, public development banks, civil society and the private sector to develop robust, holistic strategies for financing sustainable development. Well-designed INFFs can guide the allocation and use of scaled-up international financing through the SDG Stimulus.
90. The first two INFFs were launched by Nigeria and Mongolia in 2022. INFFs are being developed in 86 countries, of which more than 70% are in least developed countries (LDCs), 18 in small island developing states (SIDS) and 32 in countries in fragile contexts. The World Bank is engaging in over 40 framework processes, the IMF in more than 25 countries, and regional development banks and other international financial institutions in some 30 countries.
91. Demand from host governments for UN assistance to develop these frameworks has increased from 83 per cent to 90 per cent from 2021 to 2022. Eighty-two percent of host country Governments agreed that the UN adequately provides support for these frameworks. These numbers need to increase so the development system can provide support to all countries who request it. More than 20 UN entities are involved in the INFF process at the country-level and the Joint SDG Fund supports joint programmes mobilizing INFF activities in more than 60 countries. These numbers need to grow as well.
92. The development system approach must work at two levels: (i) it should provide immediate breathing room and support to countries devastated by the crises of the past several years, by working within the existing international financial architecture, including through the SDG Stimulus; and (ii), it should work with Member States to take concrete steps towards meaningful, long-term reform of that architecture. At the country-level, I also encourage all stakeholders to make greater use of Integrated National Financing Frameworks (INFFs) to create long-term financing strategies that can accompany national policies and plans, while ensuring their full alignment with the SDGs.

¹⁶ The January 2023 joint update provides an overview of this engagement, which includes 24 projects in LDCs, 41 in LLDCs and 21 in SIDS. It highlights that there is scope to deepen collaboration at all levels, harnessing financial and non-financial entry points, particularly in areas such as global public goods, gender equality and support to the LDCs. Report available at: <https://www.unfpa.org/session-and-informals/joint-update-undp-unfpa-unops-unicef-and-un-women-engagement-international>

B. Catalyzing partnerships to achieve the 2030 Agenda

93. In addition to leading country teams and bringing the most out of our collective assets at the country level, resident coordinators are expected to bring constituencies together and build multi-stakeholder partnerships for sustainable development. I am pleased to report that 92 per cent of host country Governments appreciated the value of resident coordinators in leveraging partnerships to achieve the SDGs. This suggests resident coordinators are asserting their convening role.
94. Catalyzing partnerships is not, however, the sole prerogative of the resident coordinator. Out of 29 United Nations development system entities, 22 reported that they have capacities to promote innovative partnership arrangements in 2022. This was an increase from 18 out of 27 in 2021.
95. I am pleased to see continued progress by UN country teams in adopting shared strategies for partnership and resource mobilization to advance joint efforts towards the SDGs. The percentage of teams with such strategies rose from 24 per cent in 2021 to 39 per cent in 2022. We need to continue this rapid pace until all teams have such strategies in place, using opportunities that arise in developing new Cooperation Frameworks. Formal working groups have proven to be valuable in supporting implementation of shared strategies.
96. After some years with modest progress, 2022 brought a noticeable increase in monitoring partnerships at the regional and country levels. Among the 28 United Nations development system entities surveyed, 20 have monitoring in place at the global level, 23 at the regional level and 22 at the country level. This is an increase from 2021, when 16 of 24 entities had monitoring in place at the global level, 20 of 26 at the regional level and 18 of 25 at the country level.
97. Governments continued to give UN country teams high marks for working with civil society, women's groups and youth. High proportions of host governments agreed with the statement that United Nations country teams are meaningfully engaging with civil society (99 per cent of host governments), women's groups (100 per cent) and youth (98 per cent). United Nations country teams have made incremental, consistent gains in pursuing a structured engagement with civil society across different stages of planning and programming. While the overall improvement is encouraging, more concerted action is needed in establishing ongoing feedback loops and putting in place remedy mechanisms.
98. The UN Global Compact increased its geographic coverage from 69 to 96 countries in 2022. As the world's largest corporate social responsibility initiative, it engages nearly 22,000 participating companies through local networks at country-level. Together with a number of other UN partners the Global Compact will convene the second annual Global Africa Business Initiative (GABI), a solutions-oriented global platform connecting leaders to drive and invest in Africa's economic growth. The Global Compact is deepening its collaboration with the UN Resident Coordinator system and will work in the coming year to implement updated guidelines for enhancing cooperation between resident coordinator offices, country teams, and local business communities. Only one third of UN development system entities have specific policies or guidelines to cooperate with Global Compact networks. I strongly encourage entities to increase such efforts.
99. South-South cooperation is another critical asset for countries to exchange not only resources, but also best-practice, know-how, technologies. It should never replace, but it is a critical complement to traditional development assistance. Nearly three quarters of United Nations development entities have integrated South-South and triangular cooperation as a specific implementation modality in their global strategic plans. The same number of entities stated that they incorporate South-South cooperation results in corporate reporting. This is an important recognition of the value of sharing knowledge on the strides that many developing countries have made in advancing the SDGs. The revamped South-South Galaxy

platform, a United Nations system-wide knowledge sharing and partnership platform, connects 500 registered organizations and offers a digital repository of over 900 development solutions. I expect accelerated implementation of the United Nations system-wide strategy on South-South and triangular cooperation and its action plan by the UNSDG

100. The 2020 quadrennial comprehensive policy review recognized that volunteerism is a powerful, cross-cutting means of implementation of the 2030 Agenda. Nearly 12,000 UN Volunteers served with 55 UN entities in 2022, including 229 in resident coordinator offices. They represented 177 nationalities, with 84 per cent from the Global South. United Nations Volunteers deployed over 200 volunteers with disabilities in 86 countries; 49 per cent were women. Among the 2022 Cooperation Frameworks, 38 per cent integrated volunteerism, particularly on SDGs and targets related to poverty, health, youth and partnership. This a promising step towards greater use of volunteerism in support of Cooperation Frameworks.

C. Harnessing science, technology and innovation to accelerate progress towards the SDGs

101. Science, technology and innovation hold great potential to unlock development progress and accelerate the SDGs. In the years ahead, we intend to strengthen modern expertise across the UN family to better assist Member States in navigating the opportunities and challenges of the twenty-first century.
102. The 2020 quadrennial review placed renewed emphasis on supporting countries to leverage science, technology and innovation, tailored to national needs and priorities. I am therefore pleased that 82 per cent of host Governments reporting receiving such support. In addition, 76 per cent of Governments in low-middle-income countries received support to map, evaluate and document science, technology and innovation solutions from the global South.
103. In our survey of the headquarters of United Nations development system entities, 24 out of 28 of entities reported that they had provided advice to countries on the transformative potential of technology and innovation. A United Nations inter-agency team, under the auspices of the Technology Facilitation Mechanism, provided tailored country-level capacity-building support. A global pilot programme on science, technology and innovation for SDG Roadmaps¹⁷ was successfully piloted in six countries in 2021, supporting mainstreaming in national development processes. This provides an opportunity for upscaling support to Member States in this important area. The Technology Bank for Least Developing Countries has also continued to provide valuable support, which I detail further in Section IV.B.1.

D. Improving the United Nations development system's offer on digital technologies

104. Technology is shaping our future. The 2020 quadrennial comprehensive policy review emphasized the importance of addressing barriers to digital inclusion and closing the digital divide. While the COVID-19 pandemic has accelerated the uptake of digital connectivity, this growth is not equal among and within countries. Many who experience the digital divide live in rural areas, and in least developed countries, landlocked developing countries and small island developing States. Despite improvements, a large gender gap in technology persists, which is particularly evident in low-middle-income countries.¹⁸
105. A large majority of Governments (89 per cent) agreed that United Nations country teams supported countries in improving digital inclusion, a noticeable improvement from 78 per cent in 2021. Nonetheless,

¹⁷ Guidebook is available at: [GUIDEBOOK_COMPLETE_V03.pdf \(un.org\)](#)

¹⁸ Broadband Commission for Sustainable Development, "The State of Broadband 2022", 2022.

several Governments highlighted the need to scale up support in the digital sphere, including in digital literacy and skills. Eighty percent of resident coordinators in lower-middle-income countries reported that their host country had requested support on digital technologies and cooperation, higher than the average (73 per cent). Part of our effort to tackle barriers to digital inclusion and leverage technology for accelerating progress on the SDGs, should include deliberate actions to support research and development and technology transfer on mutually agreed terms. This would help enhance job opportunities in science and technology sectors across different regions, and help countries capitalize on other efforts such as STEM education and labour force reskilling.

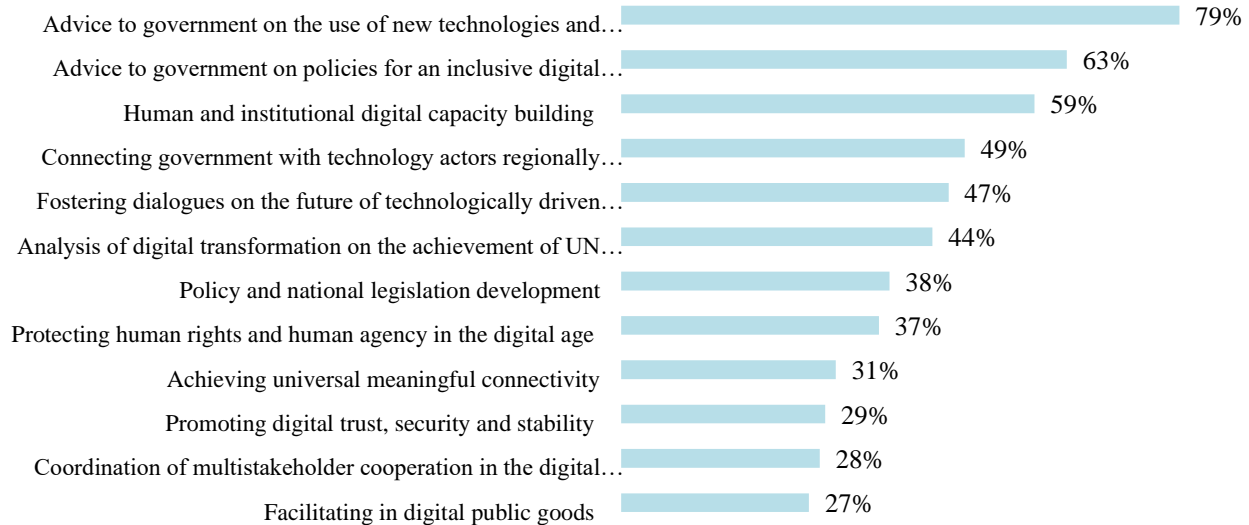
106. The United Nations development system took concrete steps at the global level to operationalize the Roadmap for Digital Cooperation.¹⁹ In 2022, it launched a set of aspirational connectivity targets for 2030 to provide benchmarks and galvanize efforts to achieve universal and meaningful connectivity. The development system also facilitated an important step forward towards integrating environmental sustainability in digital transformation. At Stockholm+50 in June 2022, the Coalition for Digital Environmental Sustainability²⁰ kicked off an Action Plan and nine global Impact Initiatives for a Sustainable Planet in the Digital Age.
107. Following the Recommendation on the Ethics of Artificial Intelligence framework adopted by 193 Member States in 2021, UNESCO developed a Readiness Assessment Methodology in 2022 to check countries' preparedness to implement the recommendation, and an Ethical Impact Assessment to identify, monitor and assess the benefits and risks of artificial intelligence systems. These tools will have a strong focus on human rights, data protection and privacy; selected countries will pilot them in 2023.²¹
108. In 2022, a large majority of respondents from entity headquarters provided advice to governments on the use of new technologies (26 out of 28 entities) and on an inclusive digital economy (24 out of 28 entities). Examples at the global level are promising. UNCTAD offered expertise on competition and consumer protection policies for an inclusive digital economy and society. FAO recently launched the Agro-informatics platform for digital transformation in agriculture. UNDP's Digital Strategy 2022-2025 is tailored to supporting governments to adopt digital solutions across sectors.

¹⁹ A/74/821.

²⁰ A multi-stakeholder alliance founded in March 2021 by the United Nations Environment Programme, United Nations Development Programme, International Science Council, German Environment Ministry, Kenyan Environment Ministry, and Future Earth.

²¹ Countries such as Colombia, Mexico, Morocco and Saudi Arabia have initiated process to set up their national steering committees on Ethics of Artificial Intelligence to oversee the piloting of the capacity building tools under development.

Figure V

Resident coordinator responses on areas of work by United Nations country teams

Source: UNSDG information management system, 2022

109. Looking forward, the Joint SDG Fund will launch a Digital Transformation Window in 2023 to provide further support to countries on digital transformation. The Office of the Envoy on Technology is coordinating consultations with stakeholders towards a Global Digital Compact, as envisioned under Our Common Agenda. Once endorsed at the 2024 Summit of the Future, this Compact will provide a solid framework to scale up support, increase synergies and strengthen our integrated offer on digital transformation.

E. Strengthening national data systems and supporting voluntary national reviews

110. Our collective pursuit of the 2030 Agenda continues to be plagued by gaps in data. This is compromising our ability to make progress. To fulfil the transformative promise of the Sustainable Development Goals and identify critical actions to deliver for those furthest behind, we must increase the availability of high-quality, timely and reliable disaggregated data (Target 17.18).
111. The 2020 quadrennial comprehensive policy review called on the United Nations development system to strengthen its support for developing national capacities for development planning and the collection and analysis of disaggregated data. In 2022, 96 per cent of United Nations country teams provided support to national statistical capacity. Among Governments and resident coordinators, 97 and 99 per cent, respectively, reported that the United Nations has contributed to strengthening institutional statistical capacity (up from 89 per cent and 96 per cent, respectively, in 2021). Government agreement that the United Nations has contributed to strengthening national capacities for data disaggregation rose from 86 per cent in 2021 to 92 per cent in 2022
112. In line with my vision of building a whole-of-UN data ecosystem that unlocks our full data potential, it is encouraging that 79 per cent of United Nations country teams provided support to national statistical

capacity through an inter-agency effort (up from 54% in 2021), exceeding our goal of 70 per cent by 2024. The United Nations development system remains will continue to vigorously support countries' efforts to accelerate progress in closing data gaps as critical to achieving the SDGs.

113. Voluntary national reviews (VNR) enable Member States to take stock of national efforts to achieve the SDGs. They facilitate the sharing of successes, challenges and lessons learned. The 2020 QCPR reiterated the call for the United Nations development system to continue to support countries in this endeavour. By July 2023, 89 per cent of host countries would have presented at least one VNR at the annual meetings of the High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development. Nearly all Governments (99 per cent) who have conducted a VNR agreed that the process strengthened coordination within the country and increased cooperation among different sectors, compared to 90 per cent in 2021. We are seeing equally positive responses from internally. Eighty-eight per cent of resident coordinators reported that VNR processes were effective in strengthening implementation of the 2030 Agenda.
114. The United Nations development system remains a strong partner in preparing VNRs, with 93 per cent of Governments reporting benefits from such support in 2022, up from 83 per cent in 2021. Governments reported that the United Nations provided support for the VNR process by providing advice (69 per cent), report drafting (68 per cent), VNR review and validation processes (64 per cent) and data collection or compilation (64 per cent). Notably, United Nations support for data dissemination nearly doubled, increasing from 25 per cent in 2021 to 46 per cent in 2022.
115. In terms of follow-up actions after the presentation of VNRs, 88 per cent of Governments reported having taken further actions, with 62 per cent requesting United Nations assistance in implementation. A recent report launched by UN DESA found that resident coordinators and UN country teams continue to play an important bridging role between ministries, UN entities and other stakeholders. The report also shows that the strong engagement of resident coordinator offices with national governments and wider stakeholders often leads to a more integrated, inclusive and holistic VNR process.²² Under the leadership of resident coordinators, I count on UN country teams to continue their sustained efforts to support Governments in achieving the SDGs through a whole-of-society approach.
116. I look forward to the High-Level Political Forum in July 2023, which will feature the presentation of 41 VNR. In preparation for the 2023 SDG Summit, we must continue to support Governments in developing and following up on ambitious VNRs to deliver the transformative change envisioned in the 2030 Agenda.

IV. Helping countries to bolster policy and action that accelerates the 2030 Agenda

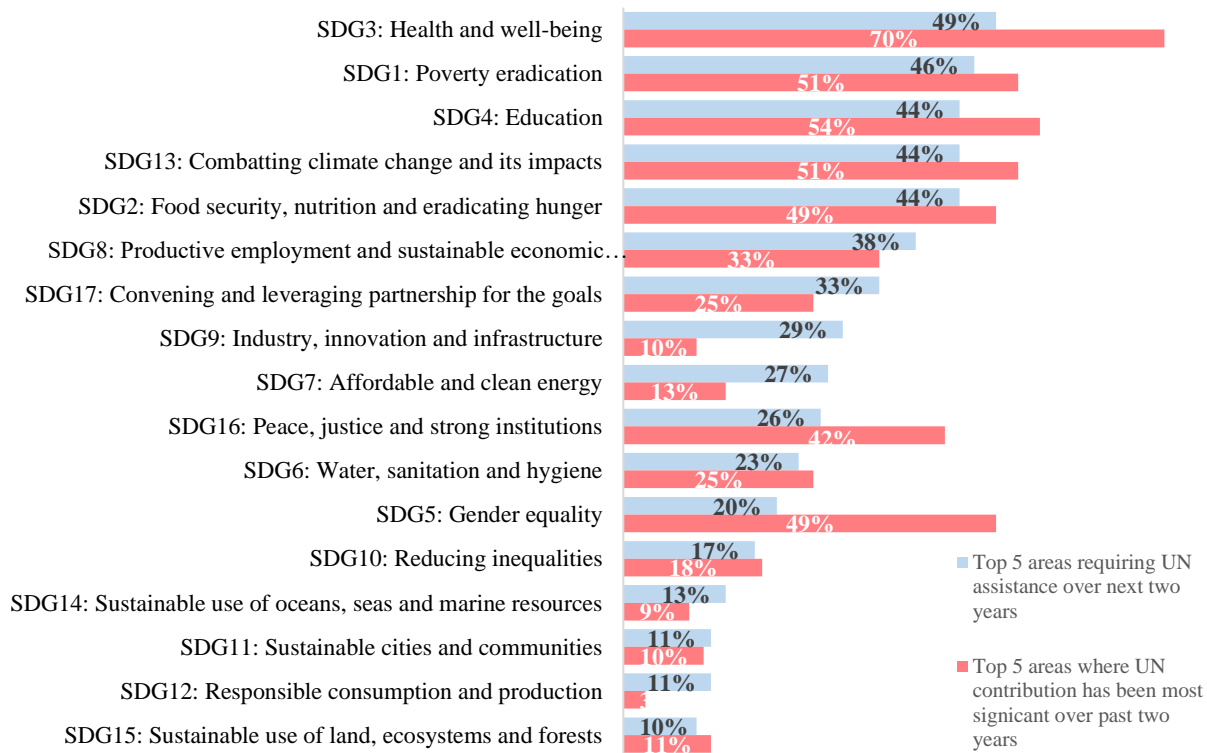
117. We have reached the halfway point of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Our pace of progress is too slow. Acceleration is demanded. Business as usual must be replaced by transformative action. The United Nations development system is directed squarely at this objective, in line with the mandate of the 2020 quadrennial comprehensive policy review.
118. Figure II provides a bird's eye view of support on policy and action that has been provided by the United Nations development system. Host countries consider that the most significant support in the last two years was provided on health and well-being (SDG 3) and education (SDG 4).

²² UN-DESA, "Enabling Transformation: The Role of UN Resident Coordinator Offices and Country Teams in Support of the Voluntary National Reviews on the 2030 Agenda", April 2022.

Figure II

Government responses on the top five areas where UN contributions have been most significant over the past two years and the top five areas requiring UN assistance over the next two years

Source: 2022 Department of Economic and Social Affairs surveys of host country Governments



119. Looking forward, Member States identified poverty and health as the two areas where they expect to require the most assistance from the United Nations development system. On poverty, there was almost universal recognition in 2022, that the revamped United Nations development system has assisted Governments in assessing the situation of the poorest (96 per cent, compared to 90 per cent in 2021). Meanwhile, 87 per cent of host countries report that they have seen improvements in how the United Nations system addresses the needs of the poorest, although this ratio falls to 79 per cent in countries where the programme size is very small. On health, almost all host Governments (98 per cent) continued to express satisfaction with how resident coordinators ensured a coherent United Nations response to the pandemic.

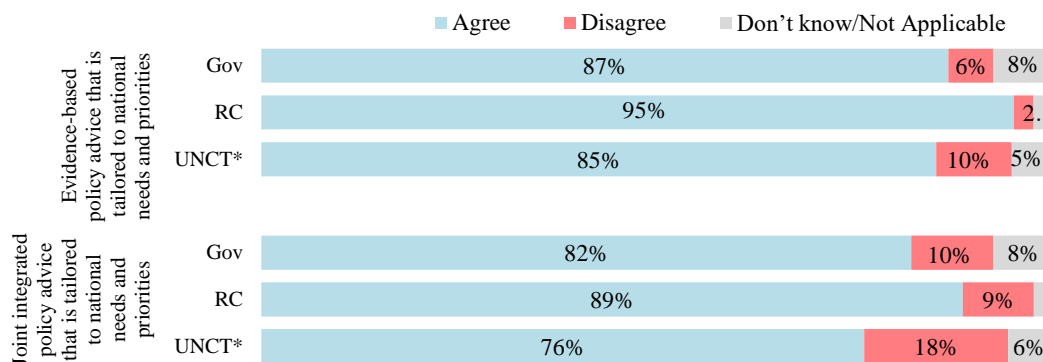
120. As we approach the 2024 quadrennial comprehensive policy review, I have commissioned an independent assessment of the functions and capacities of the United Nations development system to ensure that we meet the expectations of Member States and live up to our promise of unlocking transformative action.

A. Revamping the United Nation’s collective offer and business models to accelerate transitions and transformations for the SDGs

1. Leveraging reforms to deliver integrated policy support

121. The 2020 quadrennial comprehensive policy review mandated the United Nations development system to provide evidence-based, integrated policy advice. The United Nations development system is delivering on this request. Further to our analysis of integrated support more generally (Section II.A.3 above), it is encouraging to see that this form of support - policy advice – is well perceived by host governments, resident coordinators and the country team (Figure I). Among resident coordinators, 89 per cent assessed that United Nations country teams provide joint integrated policy advice to countries, an improvement from 2021 (79 per cent). Several resident coordinators noted that the latest global summits on education and food systems encouraged a more integrated approach.

Figure I
Government, resident coordinator and UNCT assessments of the adequacy of UNCT support on the following:



Source: 2022 Department of Economic and Social Affairs survey of Governments, resident coordinators and United Nations country team members *The question posed to the UNCT was in relation to one year ago.

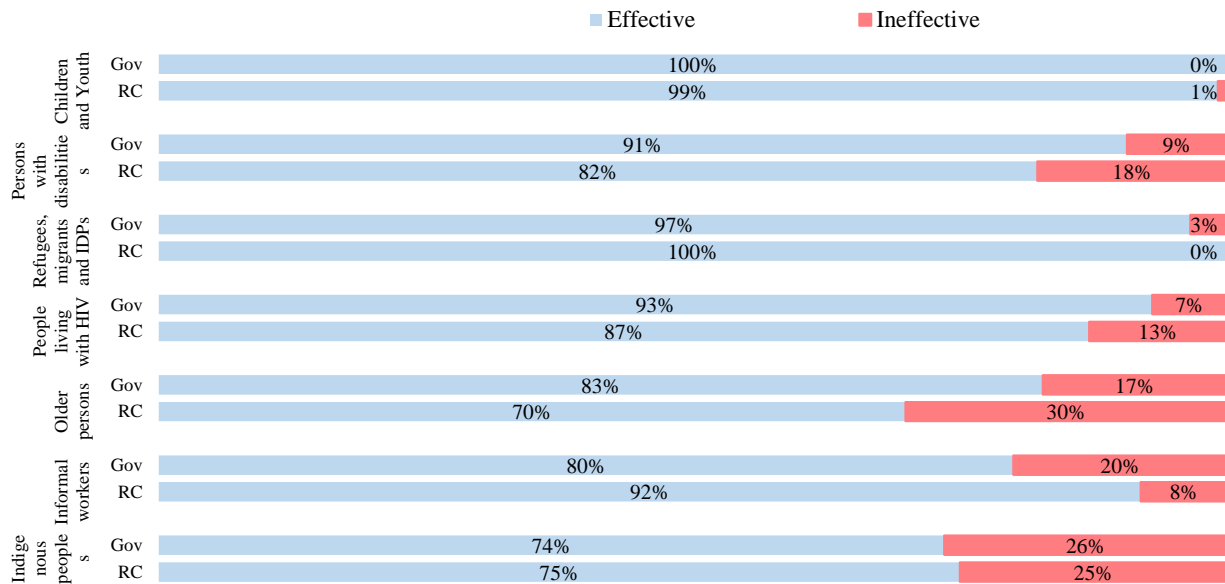
- 122. The United Nations development system continued to be the preferred partner for evidence-based and integrated policy advice. Sixty-six per cent of host country governments listed the United Nations development system as one of their top two preferred partners in terms of providing evidence-based policy advice. Sixty-one per cent did likewise in terms of integrated policy advice. This represents a marginal decrease from 70 per cent and 63 per cent respectively in 2021.
- 123. A foremost policy challenge facing Member States in 2022 has been the impact of our ongoing crises on labour markets. Increasing informality, decent work deficits and high rates of youth unemployment, among other challenges, placed great pressure on governments to respond, despite fiscal challenges and uncertain economic conditions. These impacts were most acutely felt by the four billion people without access to social protection.
- 124. The United Nations responded to this need on several levels. The Global Crisis Response Group demonstrated our ability to deliver ‘development in emergency mode.’ The Global Accelerator on Jobs and Social Protection for Just Transitions supported Member States to generate virtuous cycles of revenue

generation and long-term human development outcomes through the design, financing, and implementation of integrated national employment and social protection policies. The Technical Support Facility of the Fund partnered with the Climate Action for Jobs Initiative to support 49 countries to commit to place jobs at the centre of ambitious climate action and to promoting a just transition for all

125. Encouragingly, a sweeping majority (96 per cent) of Governments who requested support on social protection expressed satisfaction with the effectiveness of United Nations country team responses. Nearly half of these governments rated the support as very effective. While all Governments agreed that support to expand targeted social protection measures to children and youth was effective, only 74 per cent agreed this was the case for indigenous peoples (see figure IV).
126. Joint programming – a key feature of our enhanced development offer – has also supported Member States in responding to the challenge. By the end of 2022, the Joint SDG Fund had already enabled an additional 147 million people to gain temporary and permanent social protection coverage, covering 39 countries and territories.²³ All 35 joint programmes were implemented with a rights-based approach and were designed to promote gender equality. The fund catalyzed at least \$211 million in additional financing for social protection systems. An [evaluation of the Joint SDG Fund](#) by the newly established System-wide Evaluation Office concluded that the Fund plays a valuable role in empowering resident coordinators to coordinate country teams and engage stakeholders on social protection and innovative financing. However, greater efforts will be needed to ensure the window – and the Joint SDG Fund – receive a sufficient level of capitalization and contributions from a broad and diversified range of donors. Going forward, the Joint SDG Fund will also deliver under a special window on decent jobs and universal protection.

²³ UN Joint SDG Fund, “Catalyzing UN Action to Rescue the SDGs: Final report on the Social protection and Leave No One Behind Joint Programmes”, 2022.

Figure IV
United Nations country team support to host Governments in expanding targeted social protection measures*



Source: 2022 Department of Economic and Social Affairs survey of Governments and resident coordinators
 Abbreviations: Gov, Governments; RC, resident coordinators.

2. Supporting social and economic transformation in times of crisis

127. As we seek breakthroughs to accelerate progress toward the SDGs, our attention must turn to key transformations that have multiplier effects across the goals. I called for the development system to strengthen support to Member States on such transformation in my last quadrennial report (A/77/69-E/2022/47). Our attention in 2022 coalesced around three major areas – food, energy and education.
128. The transformation of food systems is central to reducing poverty and realizing human rights. The 2020 quadrennial review recognizes the important role of food security and nutrition in accelerating poverty reduction and achieving the 2030 Agenda. Following the 2021 Food Systems Summit, the United Nations Food Systems Coordination Hub was established to catalyze coordinated and country-driven transformations of food systems, to be more resilient to climate change, achieve sovereign food security, and meet targets for nutrition. As of December 2022, 117 countries have developed national pathways to sustainable food systems.
129. A new Joint SDG Fund thematic window on food systems transformation will be launched in 2023 with the goal of allocating \$350 million for joint programmes over the next five years. Plans are also under way for a National Food Systems Budgeting Tool for governments. The United Nations Food Systems Stocktaking Moment in July 2023 will be an opportune forum to review progress, share best practices, and provide solutions for current impediments to the achievement of food security.
130. The transformation of our energy systems is also paramount. The United Nations worked closely with Member States on the development of inclusive, just energy transitions in several parts of the world. Energy Compacts, a key vehicle to translate the Global Roadmap for Goal 7 into concrete actions and partnerships, grew in 2022 from 400 billion USD to 600 billion USD in new finance and investment in clean energy. Of the 50 Member States who have Energy Compacts, 28 reported on their progress in the

first annual Energy Compact Progress Report, released in September 2022. The UN-Energy Plan of Action Towards 2025, launched in 2022, aims to facilitate access to electricity for 500 million more people.

131. The transformation of our education systems was also a major priority in 2022, which the revamped business models of the United Nations development system played a key role in advancing. United Nations country teams provided crucial support in preparing the Transforming Education Summit, which I convened in September 2022. Country teams and resident coordinators used their convening power to support Governments in analysis, national consultations and prioritization, leading towards a shared vision for the future of education. Before the summit, 163 national consultations took place. These informed that National Statements of Commitment that were announced by 133 Member States during the Summit. UN entities also worked with governments and other partners to mobilize support for accelerated action in critical areas including foundational learning, education in crisis settings, girls' education, digital learning, greening of education and education financing.
132. A large majority of host Governments (94 per cent)²⁴ confirmed that United Nations country teams supported countries in expanding access to inclusive and equitable quality education. A similar proportion (93 per cent) of resident coordinators thought likewise, which was a noteworthy improvement from 81 per cent in 2021.
133. The critical task facing governments and the UN development system is to translate this new momentum into concrete improvements in classrooms, in teaching and in the learning outcomes of students. The SDG 4 High-Level Steering Committee, co-chaired UNESCO and Sierra Leone, has a critical role to play in this regard, including in monitoring implementation of global initiatives and national commitments.²⁵
134. At the country level, resident coordinators and country teams are supporting countries to advance their national commitments and to integrate education transformation into cooperation frameworks. At the regional level, peer-learning and capacity development will be organized through the regional SDG4 coordination mechanism. Looking ahead, my Special Adviser on the Summit will follow-up work to prepare a Policy Brief on Transforming Education to inform preparations for the Summit of the Future, building on the Vision Statement I presented at the Summit. Efforts are also underway to further boost the priority focus on Transforming Education in the Joint SDG Fund. I count on the full support of all UN entities and development partners to ensure these efforts lead to strengthened contributions from the UN in this area.

3. Accelerating environmental protection through a whole-of-system development approach

135. Our pursuit of the 2030 Agenda is doomed to fail until we end our war with nature. Sustainable development requires exactly that - sustainability. The quadrennial comprehensive policy review requested evidence-based policy advice and programmatic support on environmental protection. The United Nations development system has been working from the global to the local on this request.
136. Our global community has rallied together around several significant moments recently. A landmark Loss and Damage Fund was created at the 27th Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. The historic Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework brought renewed ambition to halt and reverse the loss of biodiversity by 2030. Most recently, agreement was

²⁴ The 2021 result was 95 per cent.

²⁵ Guidance note to Member States is available at: [tes_follow-up_guidance_note_-_eng.pdf \(un.org\)](https://www.un.org/development/desa/policy/2022/09/20220901_guidance_note_to_member_states_eng.pdf)

secured to protect marine biological diversity in over 70 per cent of global oceans under the Treaty for Biodiversity Beyond National Jurisdiction.

137. We have followed this up with action at the country level. Nearly all (98 per cent) of host governments reported receiving climate policy advice from the United Nations, an increase from 83 per cent in 2021. Among resident coordinators, 90 per cent confirmed that country teams had supported country capacity and integrated policy approaches to address climate change impacts and build resilience to disasters and extreme climate events.
138. Mainstreaming climate- and environment-responsive approaches into programmes and strategic plans, including in cooperation frameworks, was an important ask of the 2020 quadrennial comprehensive policy review. We have made progress in this area across the system, but more is needed. The share of cooperation frameworks with actions to implement environment agreements rose from 19 per cent to 27 per cent in 2022. This is a step in the right direction. Yet most of this progress was limited to climate action only and did not include other environment-related objectives. Moreover, 69 per cent of UN country teams, a decrease from 75 per cent in 2021, agreed that environmental considerations have been mainstreamed into programming and policy advice. Several noted that mainstreaming environment is often siloed and that more intersectoral approaches are needed.
139. Part of the challenge may lie in the starting point for cooperation frameworks – common country analyses. An internal UNEP review of a sample of 28 common country analyses and 20 cooperation frameworks found mainstreaming of environmental issues in common country analyses was weak which contributed to limited uptake of these issues in cooperation frameworks.
140. On biodiversity, the number of United Nations development system entities identifying measures to address the drivers of biodiversity loss in their strategic plans increased from 13 to 19 out of 29 in 2022. Those who included the drivers of climate change remained about the same, at 26. I expect all entities to coherently identify and present a plan to address the socio-economic and governance related drivers of biodiversity loss and climate change.
141. Part of the solution is ensuring that all experts are at the table. This means inclusive country teams that have full participation and that agree coherent, integrated approaches. While 75 per cent of host governments acknowledged that the climate policy advice they received was integrated, several mentioned that further engagement and better coordination would enhance results. Most resident coordinators, 87 per cent, an increase from 76 per cent in 2021, agreed that there is close collaboration among country team members on climate action.
142. Looking forward, we have several approaching milestones that will require the follow-up of the United Nations development system. The Mid-term Review of the Sendai Framework and the Climate Ambition Summit, among others, present crucial opportunities for the global community to take charge of our precarious relationship with our only planet. Nothing more than life itself is at stake.

4. Keeping the promise to leaving no one behind

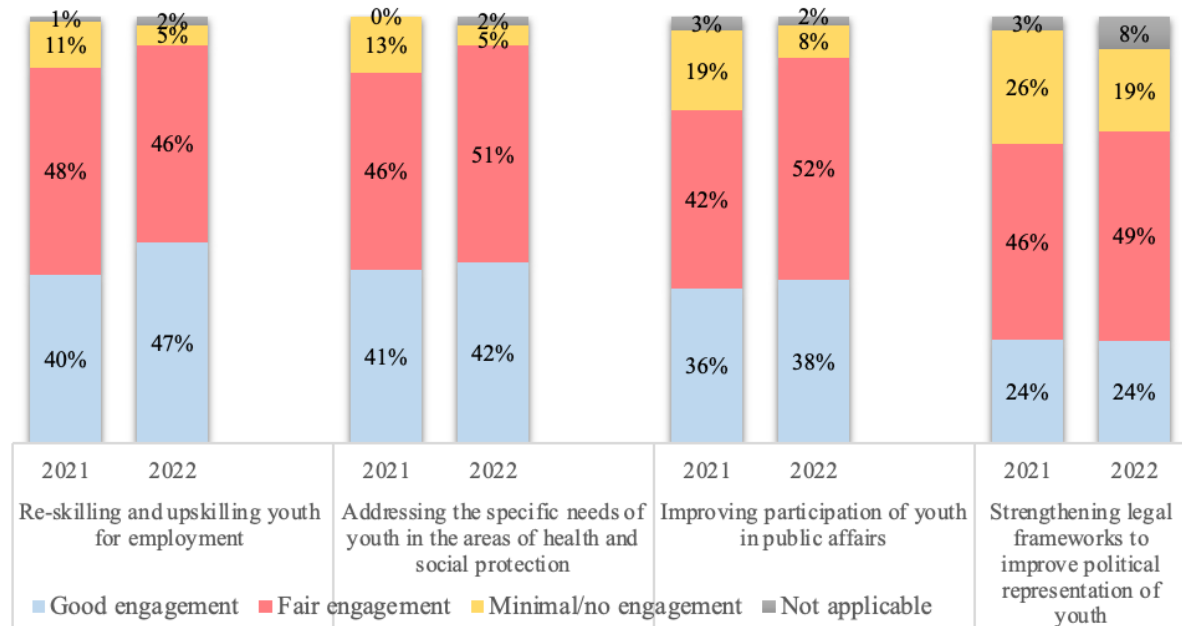
143. The 2030 Agenda is an agenda that leaves no one behind. Sustainable development is no development at all if it excludes women, youth and indigenous persons. Our collective efforts to advance the Sustainable Development Goals must be anchored in human rights for all. Recent impartial evidence has emerged on what leaving no one behind means in practice. An [independent evaluation, conducted by our System-wide Evaluation Office](#), concluded that the United Nations system-wide response to COVID-19 was strongly anchored in human rights, gender equality and leaving no one behind as guiding principles. United Nations

country teams took ownership and responsibility for these principles and supported governments to ensure that national responses addressed the needs of most-marginalized populations.

144. The demand for human rights support for sustainable development was strong in 2022. Eighty-seven per cent of resident coordinators confirmed that host government requested human rights policy support in 2022. This compares with 79 per cent in 2021. The perceptions of the quality of support provided was also generally positive. Ninety per cent of host governments considered that the support from United Nations country teams in meeting obligations under international human rights treaties was adequate. This ratio was an increase from 84 per cent in 2021.
145. Leaving no one behind includes not leaving women and girls behind. Governments ranked gender equality as among the top six most important areas receiving significant UN support over the past two years. Ninety-two per cent of host countries requested assistance on this area in 2022. The vast majority (96 per cent) of host countries in 2022 reported that the support of the United Nations in strengthening institutional mechanisms and legal frameworks to prevent and eliminate violence against women and girls was effective. The Spotlight Initiative, a flagship effort led from my office, exceeded expectations with its contributions to an eightfold increase in national budgets to address violence against women and girls. In 2021, the Spotlight Initiative contributed to the development or strengthening of 198 national laws across 41 countries and the strengthening of 43 National Action Plans to eliminate violence against women and girls. The initiative has allocated \$179 million to civil society groups, which represents half of its programmable funding.
146. Youth are also essential, as highlighted in my previous report. Eighty-five per cent of resident coordinators reported that their host countries have requested support on youth. This was an increase from 76 per cent in 2021. Resident coordinators indicated encouraging improvements in their engagement with the country team on youth matters (Figure VII). I am pleased to report that 25 out of 27 entities confirmed they have new policies to step up their work for, and with, youth in line with the United Nations Youth Strategy.

Figure VII

Resident coordinators’ assessment of United Nations country team engagement on youth



Source: 2022 Department of Economic and Social Affairs survey of resident coordinators

147. I was pleased that the General Assembly, through resolution [76/306](#), decided to establish a dedicated United Nations Youth Office to systematically integrate youth voices across the United Nations system. I am confident that the Office will strengthen system-wide advances on youth issues and place youth at the centre of sustainable development. In keeping with my Policy Brief on Meaningful Youth Participation, I urge country teams to support governments in expanding opportunities for youth to meaningfully participate in decision-making processes to advance the SDGs.
148. Leaving no one behind also means recognizing the needs and rights of indigenous people, as called for the 2020 quadrennial review. I am concerned that indigenous peoples continue to be among the groups with which United Nations country teams are least engaged. In the past four years, only 23 per cent of United Nations country teams supported Governments in formulating policies or programmes to address structural inequalities facing indigenous peoples. Only 15 per cent of United Nations country teams consulted indigenous peoples in developing their current programming instrument. Thirty-nine per cent have a Cooperation Framework or equivalent document that includes the realization of indigenous peoples' rights as part of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda.
149. I am concerned about the declining number of United Nations country teams establishing or strengthening consultative mechanisms for dialogue on national development processes (57 per cent in 2022, down from 68 per cent in 2021) as well as establishing indigenous peoples' advisory boards (9 per cent in 2022, down from 12 per cent in 2021). I am counting on all entities to reverse this trend. I have directed heads of entities to ramp up implementation of the system-wide action plan on indigenous peoples, including in promoting consultative mechanisms and platforms, towards the full realization of their rights.
150. Finally, the United Nations development system has stepped up our collective offer to people on the move. Over the past four years, in keeping with the recent agreement of Global Compacts on Migrants and Refugees, 75 per cent of United Nations country teams supported Governments in formulating policies to address structural inequalities facing migrants, 63 per cent for refugees and asylum seekers, and, to a lesser extent, 37 per cent for internally displaced persons. In the development of current programming instruments, 21 per cent of United Nations country teams consulted migrants, 15 per cent refugees and asylum seekers and 8 per cent internally displaced persons.
151. Addressing the record numbers of internally displaced persons is an urgent priority, with development at the center as we address root causes of displacement. I appointed my Special Adviser on Solutions to Internal Displacement to advance my Action Agenda on Internal Displacement. I expect this Agenda to fast-track our efforts to find solutions to displacement, better prevent future displacement crises from emerging, and ensure more effective protection and assistance. Country teams are already working towards Government-lead and development-supported solutions with the aim of placing at least 10 million IDPs on 'solutions pathways' and developing new approaches to this urgent challenge. Several governments have already set such solution pathways in motion or at the final stages of doing so. I encourage Member States to continue supporting this Agenda by scaling-up efforts, including by developing and rolling out solutions strategies and organizing national dialogues with IDPs, civil society and the international community to help shape solutions to internal displacement in line with IDPs' wishes and rights.

B. Tailoring support to each country context

1. Bridging SDG gaps in the least developed countries, landlocked least developed countries and small island developing states

152. Countries in special situations bear the least responsibility for several global crises, including climate change. Yet they usually bear the highest cost. The quadrennial comprehensive policy review called for attention to be given to the development needs of least developed countries (LDCs), landlocked developing countries (LLDCs) and small island developing States (SIDs). The review also called for a strengthening of partnership and support in Africa.
153. I am encouraged to see a robust recent increase in resources for operational activities in countries in special situations (see figure IX).²⁶ The share of total expenditure for operational activities in LDCs reached 50.5 per cent in 2022. Resources for LLDCs reached a similar level in per capita terms. Spending on operational activities SIDs saw the largest growth rate of any group of countries. The survey of contributing countries identified that LDCs, African countries and SIDs are the three country groups that are most prioritized when making funding decisions (See Figure II.15).

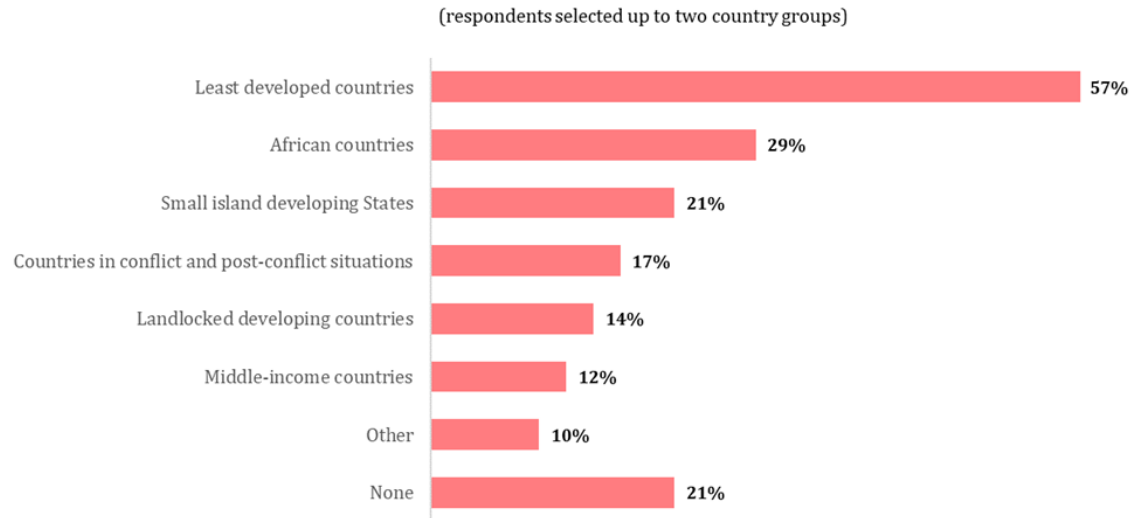
Figure IX
Expenditures on operational activities for development, including humanitarian assistance, by country group

| Country group | Number of countries | Total 2021 expenditure (millions of United States dollars) | Average expenditures per country (millions of United States dollars) | Expenditures as a share of the total | Five-year trend in expenditures | Expenditures per capita (United States dollars) |
|---------------------------------|---------------------|--|--|--------------------------------------|---------------------------------|---|
| Least developed countries | 46 | 17,628 | 383 | 50.5% | +66% | 16.03 |
| Small island developing States | 55 | 1,313 | 24 | 3.8% | +121% | 18.24 |
| Landlocked developing countries | 32 | 9,157 | 286 | 26.3% | +43% | 16.62 |
| Africa | 54 | 15,038 | 278 | 43.1% | +39% | 10.80 |
| Middle-income countries | 109 | 18,128 | 166 | 52.0% | +51% | 3.12 |
| All host countries | 162 | 34,338 | 212 | 100% | +57% | 5.22 |

Source: Office of Intergovernmental Support and Coordination for Sustainable Development, Department of Economic and Social Affairs.

²⁶ The list of countries under each category is on the website of the United Nations Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States. Countries may feature in one or more categories. <https://www.un.org/ohrlls/>

Figure II.15

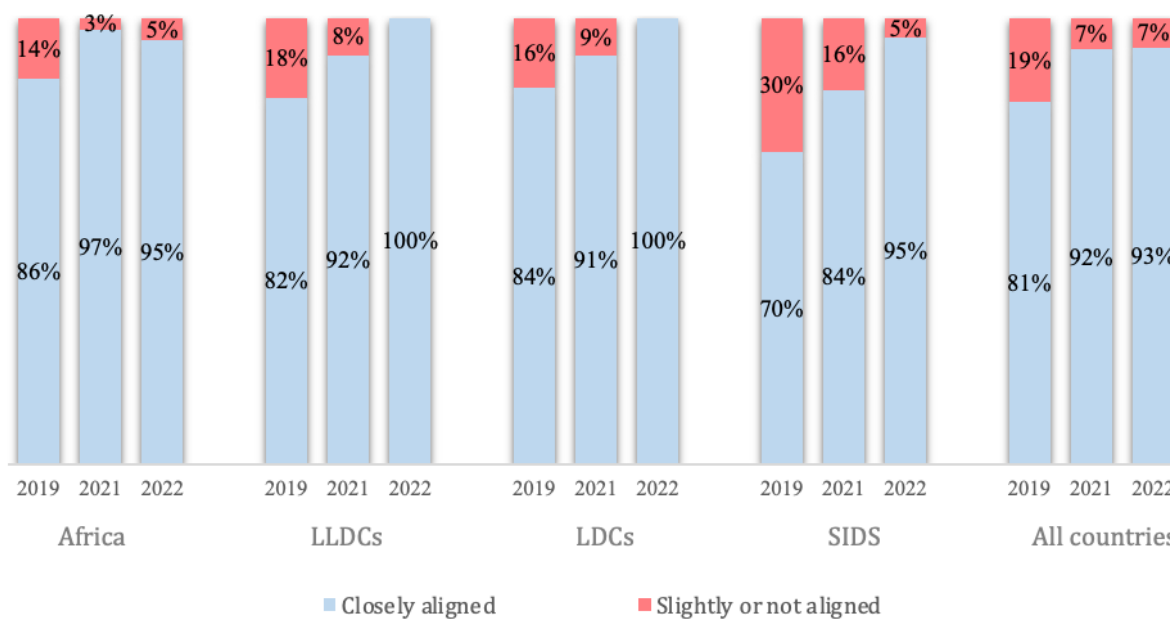
Country groups that contributing countries prioritize the most when making funding decisions

Source: 2022 Department of Economic and Social Affairs survey of contributing countries

154. Countries in special situations generally report favourably on progress made through the repositioning of the development system. All SIDS agreed that United Nations system entities are working more collaboratively than before reforms. Eighty-two per cent of African countries (82 per cent) and 79 per cent of both LDCs and LLDCs concluded likewise.
155. I am pleased to highlight consistent improvements in the alignment of the United Nations development system to the needs and priorities of special countries (Figure X). All LDCs and LLDCs consider that development system activities are closely aligned with their needs and priorities. Ninety-five per cent of African countries and 94 per cent of SIDS perceive likewise.²⁷ (see Figure X).

²⁷ A total of 30 LDCs, 26 LLDCs, 22 SIDS and 39 African countries responded to the DESA questionnaire for host country Governments.

Figure X

Alignment of activities with national development needs and priorities

Source: 2022 Department of Economic and Social Affairs survey of host country Governments.

156. This alignment is driven through several mechanisms. Effective cooperation frameworks are one key mechanism. Similar to 2021, over 95 per cent of LDCs, LLDCs, SIDS and African countries reported that cooperation frameworks enable Governments to ensure that United Nations development system activities effectively address national priorities, including on the SDGs. Appropriate country team configuration is also important for ensuring alignment with national priorities. All LDCs and LLDCs surveyed considered the United Nations configuration adequately tailored for meeting their specific needs and challenges in 2022, up from 92 and 89 per cent the previous year. This sentiment was shared by 79 per cent of SIDS, up from 61 per cent the previous year.
157. Countries in special situations highlighted that they have received support on several SDGs. LDCs, LLDCs, SIDS and African countries identified health and well-being (SDG 3), education (SDG 4) and climate change (SDG 13) as among the top five areas where they received UN support in the past five years. The remaining top areas of support received were poverty eradication (SDG 1; LDCs, LLDCs and African countries), food security, nutrition and eradicating hunger (SDG 2; LDCs, SIDS and African countries), and gender equality (SDG 5; LLDCs and SIDS).
158. When asked to assess the adequacy of United Nations support provided to them, countries in special situations generally responded favourably (Figure XI). Nearly all countries (100 per cent of LDCs, LLDCs and African countries, and 90 per cent of SIDS) agreed that the support provided on statistical capacities and data collection, analysis and management was adequate. High proportions (97 per cent of LDCs, 96 per cent of LLDCs, 95 per cent of African countries and 90 per cent of SIDS) considered that technical support in line with national needs and priorities was adequate. Similarly, nearly all (95 per cent of SIDS, 93 per cent of LDCs and 92 per cent of LLDCs and African countries) rated the support on evidence-based policy advice to be adequate. The positive results among SIDS are especially welcome because they

demonstrate that course correction measures are working after I noted concern in this area in my last report (A/77/69-E/2022/47).

Figure XI

The extent that groups of countries agree that the United Nations adequately provides the following:

| | MICs | LDCs | LLDCs | SIDS | Africa |
|--|------|------|-------|------|--------|
| Evidence-based policy advice that is tailored to national needs and priorities | 97% | 93% | 92% | 95% | 92% |
| Joint integrated policy advice that is tailored to national needs and priorities | 93% | 86% | 85% | 95% | 83% |
| Technical support in line with national needs and priorities | 96% | 97% | 96% | 90% | 95% |
| Support to financing for the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) | 91% | 87% | 88% | 80% | 89% |
| Support for integrated national financing frameworks | 84% | 88% | 83% | 71% | 88% |
| Support to leverage partnerships in support of national development priorities | 95% | 90% | 92% | 86% | 89% |
| Support for statistical capacities and data collection, analysis and management | 99% | 100% | 100% | 90% | 100% |

Source: 2022 Department of Economic and Social Affairs survey of host country Governments.

159. There is heterogeneity in satisfaction levels between groups. While 95 per cent of SIDS agreed that they receive adequate support on joint integrated policy advice, only 86 per cent of LDCs, 84 per cent of LLDCs and 83 per cent of African countries shared the same view. Some 71 per cent of SIDS, 83 per cent of LLDCs, 88 per cent of LDCs and 89 per cent of African countries agreed that they receive adequate UN support for integrated national financing frameworks, which is similar to all countries (83 per cent). This further suggests there is room to lift the offer of the United Nations development system on finance for sustainable development, as discussed more in section III.A. above.
160. The Doha Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2022-2031 calls on United Nations development system entities to actively support its implementation. A roadmap for the United Nations development system to implement the Programme is under preparation. This will ensure coherent and coordinated action, buttressed by effective monitoring and implementation. It will draw upon effective mechanisms and assets of the system, such as the Technology Bank for LDCs. This bank continues to provide valuable contributions to strengthen the science, technology and innovation capacity toward structural transformation. In 2022, the Technology Bank piloted a new model for designing technology transfer projects that it will apply in 2023 to initiatives on health care, sustainable housing, food systems and digitalization in the Gambia, Malawi, Mozambique and Niger.
161. The United Nations development system has continued support for countries graduating from the LDC category, particularly those who will graduate in 2023 (Bhutan) and 2024 (Angola, Sao Tome and Principe and Solomon Islands). The Sustainable Graduation Support Facility brings together country-specific and integrated advisory and capacity-building services across the United Nations system. The inter-agency task force on graduation also continues to provide support to graduating countries.

162. In implementing the Vienna Programme of Action for Landlocked Developing Countries for the Decade 2014-2024, it is encouraging that annual spending on operational activities for development in the 32 LLDCs increased by 43 per cent between 2016 and 2021, surpassing \$9 billion. Next year's Third United Nations Conference on Landlocked Developing Countries will comprehensively review the programme's implementation and formulate a course of action for the years ahead. Resident coordinators and United Nations country teams will be fully involved in preparations for the event.
163. Mainstreaming the SAMOA Pathway and SIDS-related issues was a further clear ask of the quadrennial comprehensive policy review. It is encouraging that United Nations spending on operational activities for development in SIDS nearly doubled between 2020 and 2021 to an average of \$33 million per country. United Nations development support to SIDS on COVID-19 was well regarded.²⁸ The Fourth International Conference on SIDS in 2024 will be a good opportunity to assess progress and to adjust course as needed.
164. African countries have been hit by a confluence of shocks, including weaker external demand, increases in global inflation and higher borrowing costs, as well as adverse weather effects, hikes in food and energy prices and other crises linked to the war in Ukraine. This makes our joint work with the African Union all the more timely and needed, organized under the African Union – United Nations Framework for the Implementation of Agenda 2063 and the 2030 Agenda. United Nations development system expenditure in Africa amounted to \$15.5 billion in 2021, more than any other region, accounting for over 44 per cent of total country-level expenditures. The Regional Collaborative Platform in Africa (discussed more above) and the Inter-Departmental Task Force on African Affairs enhanced United Nations coordination in support of African countries, particularly on energy, which is a key driver for socioeconomic recovery in Africa.
165. Looking forward, countries in special situations shared several of the same top five priority SDGs to receive United Nations support in the next five years. LDCs, LLDCs, SIDS and African countries identified poverty eradication (SDG 1), food security, nutrition and eradicating hunger (SDG 2), health and well-being (SDG 3), climate change (SDG 13) and education (SDG 4). LDCs, LLDCs and SIDS also identified productive employment and sustainable economic growth (SDG 8), while SIDS added sanitation and hygiene (SDG 6, SIDS). African countries also identified partnerships (SDG 17) as a top priority.

2. Supporting middle-income countries to invest in the necessary transitions to accelerate SDG progress

166. Middle-income countries (MICs) are home to approximately two thirds of the world's population, including some 62 per cent of the world's poor. Many face the same vulnerabilities of low-income countries, including from external debt, volatile exchange rates and capital flows, overdependence on commodities, weak health, education and social protection systems, and the adverse effects of disaster risks and climate change. Yet their challenges are often seen as less urgent than those of poorer countries.
167. The United Nations development system continues to provide targeted support to MICs considering their varying development needs, as called for in the quadrennial review. MICs rated the adequacy of this support highly (Figure XI above). This was particularly the case with regards to evidence-based policy advice tailored to their needs and priorities (97 per cent) and leveraging partnerships in support of national development priorities (95 per cent). Similar to other country groups, there is room for improvement on

²⁸ The United Nations development system's support to COVID-19 response was assessed by 95 per cent of SIDS as timely and by 89 per cent as comprehensive, similar to all host countries (95 and 91 per cent).

support for integrated national financing frameworks with 84 per cent of MICs agreeing that support in this area is adequate.²⁹

168. MICs selected health and well-being (SDG 3), combating climate change (SDG 13), poverty eradication (SDG 1), education (SDG 4) and gender equality (SDG 5) as areas where the UN contribution has been most significant in the past two years. They prioritized four of these goals (SDGs 3, 4, 1 and 13) as well as the goal on productive employment and sustainable economic growth (SDG 8) as the top five areas where MICs will require UN assistance over the next two years.
169. To revive progress towards the Goals, however, it is crucial to develop new measures of progress that go beyond GDP. This is one of my priorities towards gaining a full understanding of countries' vulnerabilities and needs. I also look forward to the report of the High-level Panel of Experts on the Development of a Multidimensional Vulnerability Index (MVI), expected to be launched in June 2023.
170. A mapping exercise with a detailed overview of support available to the MICs, as mandated by General Assembly resolution 76/215, is being completed. It includes information from the latest DESA quadrennial comprehensive policy review surveys, information on financial support from the UN development system for host countries, and other quantitative and qualitative sources. The results will be included in my report on development cooperation with middle-income countries, which will be submitted to the seventy-eighth session of the General Assembly. I am confident that this exercise will help us to further enhance coordinated and inclusive support to MICs based on their specific challenges and diverse needs.

V. Continuing to fortify the UN development system's accountability and oversight

A. Results-based management and reporting built on evidence

171. We have said it from day one – the litmus test of the repositioning of the UN development system is whether it is able to deliver better results on the ground. Collective and transparent reporting on system-wide results at the country, regional and global levels is therefore essential. We are strengthening reporting year after year. The annual report on system-wide results and support to the SDGs requested in resolution 72/279 is provided to Member States.³⁰ The resident coordinator system results framework requested in resolution 76/4 has been finalized in consultation with Member States and the first set of results are published in the report of the Chair of the UNSDG. In addition, annual regional results reports are prepared through regional collaborative platforms and presented at regional sustainable development forums.³¹
172. All United Nations country teams have prepared annual country results reports covering 2022, in line with the funding compact commitment.³² Feedback from Governments showed satisfaction with the quality of

²⁹ In total, 75 MICs responded to the DESA questionnaire for host country Governments.

³⁰ https://unsdg.un.org/sites/default/files/2022-05/UNDCO_Report_2022_05_16_2022.pdf

³¹ The regional forums for sustainable development in 2023 were held in Africa (28 February – 2 March); the Arab region (14 – 16 March); Asia-Pacific (27-30 March); Europe (29-30 March); and Latin America and the Caribbean (26-28 April).

³² UNSDG commitment #4

the reports. Over 79 per cent of Governments who responded noted that sufficient financial data are included in annual reports, up from 58 per cent from the previous year.

173. Progress has also been made on advancing common standards for system-wide financial reporting. In 2022, all United Nations entities submitted financial data to the Chief Executives Board, which ensures strong comparability of system-wide data that are then available publicly on its website (<https://unsceb.org/financial-statistics>). Thirty-six of 46 United Nations entities reported on their programme expenditure against the SDGs in 2022 compared to 24 entities in 2021.³³ Nonetheless, a significant share of entities do not yet publish project documents and lists of projects (15 of 28 and 11 of 29, respectively). This must be addressed urgently so Member States have a clear picture of the support provided by the system at large to accelerate action towards the sustainable development goals.
174. Sixty-one per cent (17 of 28) of the UNSDG entities surveyed report that they publish financial data that meets the International Aid Transparency Initiative or equivalent standard, up from the funding compact baseline of 36 per cent in 2017. Over the past year, the Secretariat has begun to ensure its departments can boost their reporting quality and reach this standard. We must accelerate this shift and I expect the High-level Committee on Management to make sure the Secretariat will meet this mark by 2024.
175. At the global level, the new UNSDG Output Indicator Framework allows UNSDG entities to measure the United Nations contribution towards the SDGs. Building on the shared methodology developed during the COVID-19 response, the framework draws on existing indicators from UNSDG entities, reducing transaction costs for UNSDG entities and building a system-wide picture of the UN development system contribution to the SDGs. The first results are published and showcase contributions from 19 country team early adopters.

B. Putting system-wide evaluation on a firm footing

176. The UNSDG System-Wide Evaluation Office is now established. This was a commitment that I made in my last quadrennial report (A/77/69-E/2022/47), in which I reiterated the mandate of this office and proposed a lean structure, headed by a Director at the D-2 level, supported by a small team reporting directly to me. A Director a.i. has been appointed through a temporary job opening until a director is appointed a fixed term post. The post was advertised in December 2022 and the recruitment process is nearing completion.
177. This office has the prerogative to share reports directly with the Economic and Social Council. The Member States have expressed their support for my proposal in resolution 72/279 and reiterated their backing in subsequent resolutions on the quadrennial comprehensive policy review. Pursuant to General Assembly resolution 35/217, I sought and obtained the concurrence of the Advisory Committee for the extension of a post of Director of the UNSDG System-Wide Evaluation Office at the D-2 level for one year, from 1 January to 31 December 2023, utilizing extrabudgetary resources.
178. To finance the office using extrabudgetary resources, I have established a trust fund to receive extrabudgetary contributions in support of the Office's activities and the Chair of the UNSDG wrote to all Member States inviting contributions. At this stage, two Member States have provided resources. The funds received are limited to covering the cost of hiring the Director for one year and the office space expenses. This has limited the capacity of the office to be functional. I therefore welcome the recommendation of the

³³ The total number of United Nations entities included in the Chief Executives Board for the purposes of financial reporting includes entities across the United Nations system and differs from the total of the UNSDG.

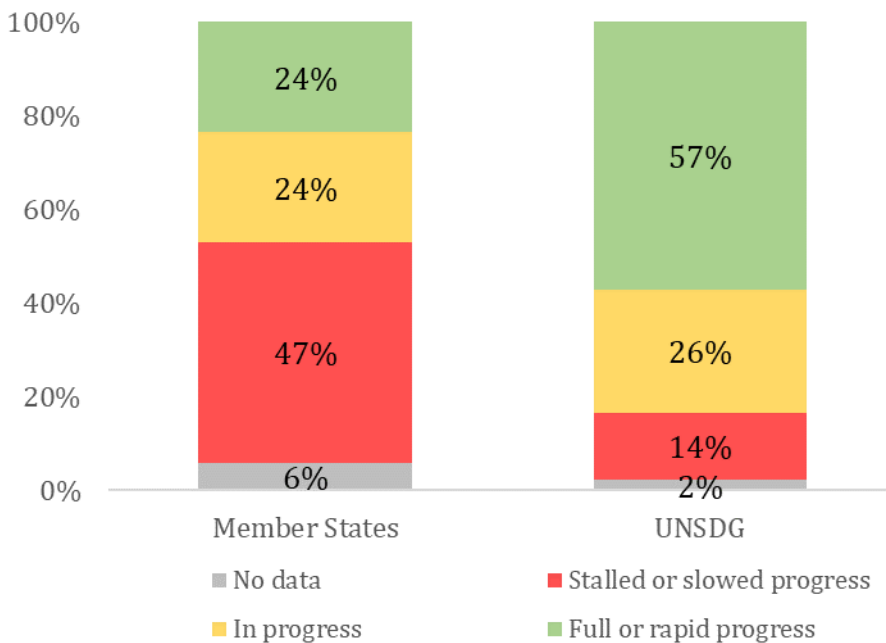
Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions (AC/2193) that the office be funded through the regular budget. I intend to put forward a request for funding of the office into the upcoming regular budget proposal with a total cost of approximately 2.5 million USD per year. I consider having a stable funding through regular resources for the System-Wide Evaluation office is critical for learning, transparency, accountability and improvement of the United Nations development System.

179. Even in its inception phase, the System-Wide Evaluation Office has made important, foundational progress in fulfilling its mandate to strengthen oversight, transparency, accountability and collective learning among the United Nations development system entities. The Office has already completed system-wide evaluations on the Joint SDG Fund (discussed in Section V.B below) and the response to the COVID-19 pandemic.
180. The evaluation of the [United Nations development system's socio-economic response to COVID-19](#) made several forward-looking recommendations to strengthen aspects of reform, including greater integration of reform actions in entities' strategic plans. A management response has been completed and [is available publicly](#). The UNSDG has initiated actions aligned to the recommendations, including a review of the Management and Accountability Framework and the distribution and follow-up on the reform checklist for UNSDG governing bodies.
181. The System-Wide Evaluation Office is now midway through an evaluation of the Spotlight Initiative. In addition, at the recommendation of the UNSDG, the office will also launch a system-wide evaluation of country programme derivation and alignment with Cooperation Framework. I look forward to this evaluation, which should provide invaluable insight into programming at the country level and opportunities to further enhance the alignment of the development system's offer to meet the needs and priorities of Member States.
182. Two crucial design features of the System-Wide Evaluation Office are its independence and its transparency. All system-wide evaluations are published online and freely available. The office also applies United Nations Evaluation Group norms and standards to ensure impartiality in the design and conduct of its evaluations. I am confident that this office will continue to grow in its ability to deliver invaluable system-wide evaluative evidence on the contribution of the United Nations development system towards implementing the 2030 Agenda.
183. More broadly, there has been further progress in shifting towards a culture of joint and system-wide evaluations wherever possible.. Evidence from 2022 surveys shows that 19 responding entities (66 per cent) had completed at least one joint evaluation with another UN entity in 2022, up from 59 per cent in 2021. This level is still below the Funding Compact target of 75 per cent. In survey feedback, entities highlighted hurdles related to such evaluations in the form of capacity and budgets, mandates differences, accountability requirements vis-à-vis governing bodies and quality assurance mechanisms. I expect joint evaluations to grow in tandem with increases in joint programming and pooled funds as they did under the Joint SDG Fund.
184. With the establishment of the System-Wide Evaluation Office, I have asked the Acting Director to finalize the System-Wide Evaluation Policy in collaboration with the United Nations Sustainable Development Group and evaluation offices throughout the system. I anticipate that the Policy will be completed shortly.
185. Feedback from entities confirmed that system-wide networks such as the United Nations Evaluation Group provide a strong incentive for more joint evaluations and better standards for independence. Most entities (23 of 29) noted that their evaluation unit meets the group's standards for independence, up from 22 in the previous year. Half of entities ensure that all evaluations include a management response. Nearly two thirds (18 of 28) now make all evaluations publicly available.

VI. The Funding Compact: unfinished business

186. The Funding Compact is built on the premise that adequate, predictable and sustainable funding, combined with enhanced transparency and accountability, enables the United Nations development system to deliver more collaboratively, effectively and efficiently. Both Member States and the United Nations development system have made important progress in meeting the Compact. Nonetheless, several commitments have not been met (Figure XX). Four years after its adoption, with some targets now expiring, it is important to review how the Funding Compact is driving commitments from Member States and the UNSDG towards better results for countries, and what steps can be taken to further accelerate progress in this regard.

Figure XX
Progress on funding compact commitments



Source: Department of Economic and Social Affairs, 2023

A. Progress of the United Nations Sustainable Development Group

187. The UNSDG has met, or is experiencing rapid progress, on 57 per cent of the Funding Compact targets. The Group is making progress towards a further 26 per cent of targets. The remaining 14 per cent are stalled or experiencing insufficient progress.
188. The leadership and commitments of UNSDG entities and country teams has enabled a step change in system-wide reporting, linking resources to SDG results, and in improving transparency of our operations. All country teams produced an annual country results report in 2022. A large majority of country governments agree that there is an improved focus among country teams on common results and the provision of integrated policy advice. Targets for business efficiency gains have been realized as discussed above.

189. I am concerned, however, that progress has been slower, or stalled, on some important commitments. Less than half (48 per cent) of country teams have conducted a gender scorecard exercise in the past four years. Only 42 per cent of UNSDG entities report at least 15% of development related expenditures on Joint Programmes and only 68% of country teams have a common and updated budgetary framework.

B. Improvements in the funding mix for sustainable development

190. Core funding is crucial and a critical component of the funding compact. It allows entities to generate efficiencies and enhance impact with greater ability to deploy funds where they are most needed. Entities can take a more calculated, coherent approach by investing in strategic action that is not blown aside by the winds of immediate needs.
191. A higher share of development funding went to core resources in 2021 compared to 2020. When assessed contributions are included, the core share of development funding exceeded the target of 30 per cent for the first time since the funding compact was adopted (figure z). This is an encouraging development. Yet, acceleration is still required on core funding from voluntary sources and the increases in core may not be an indicator of a wider positive trend. In fact, the growth in core funding was partly due to a 2021 increase in the assessed budget of WHO. Member States have demonstrated commitment to improve the funding model of the WHO with the target of ensuring its assessed contributions constitute 50 per cent of WHO's approved programme budget within the next eight years.³⁴
192. The higher reported core figure for 2021 also results from new multi-year pledges made by Governments to the voluntary core budgets of UNDP and UNICEF.³⁵ Multi-year commitments constitute valuable investments in the United Nations development system, improving the predictability of the funding base and the sustainability of programmes.
193. More concerningly, two thirds of net contributing countries surveyed (10 out of 16)³⁶ indicated that they had no plans to increase the amount or share of their core funding by the end of 2023, with respondents highlighting continued concerns over limited visibility on how core resources are spent and the results achieved.
194. It is critical that we keep placing a spotlight on core contributions as we move ahead with the funding compact. I am confident that Member States will continue to rise to the challenge of meeting this commitment.

³⁴ In the 2020–2021 budget biennium, assessed contributions accounted for a 16 per cent share of the total budget.

³⁵ Data presented in this originates from the CEB financial database and reporting system, which is based on the IPSAS (International Public Sector Accounting Standards), meaning that revenue is recognized at the time of an agreement, even in cases of a multi-year agreement. Individual entities may apply a different standard when constructing their annual financial statements.

³⁶ DESA survey of financially contributing Governments.

Figure z

Funding Compact: Member States commitment 1

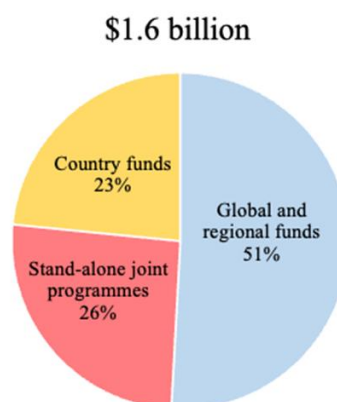
| To increase core resources for the UN development system | | | | |
|---|-----------------|---------------|-----------------|-------|
| Indicator | Baseline | Target | Latest value | Trend |
| MS. 1.1. Core share of voluntary funding for development-related activities | 19.4% (2017) | 30% (2023) | 21.4% (2021) | |
| MS 1.2. Core share of funding for development-related activities (including assessed contributions) | 27.0% (2017) | 30% (2023) | 30.7% (2021) | |

Source: Department of Economic and Social Affairs, 2023. Note: Trend colours: Red is stalled or slow progress. Yellow is in progress. Green is full or rapid progress.

C. Action needed on pooled funding

195. Total contributions to development-related inter-agency funds grew to \$1.6 billion in 2021 from \$1.5 billion in 2020. These funds now account for 12.3 per cent of all non-core funding for development activities and exceed the Funding Compact target of 10 per cent for the second straight year (Figure A). This is a noteworthy result. Pooled funding brings entities together and deliver more.
196. From a geographic perspective, contributions to global and regional funds increased to \$824 million in 2021. This was an increase of 19.3 per cent from 2020. This growth is lower than the growth rate in the previous year (2019 to 2020), of 72 per cent. In total, global and regional funds accounted for 51 per cent of all resources to inter-agency pooled funds in 2021, compared to 46 per cent in 2020 (Figure B).

Figure B

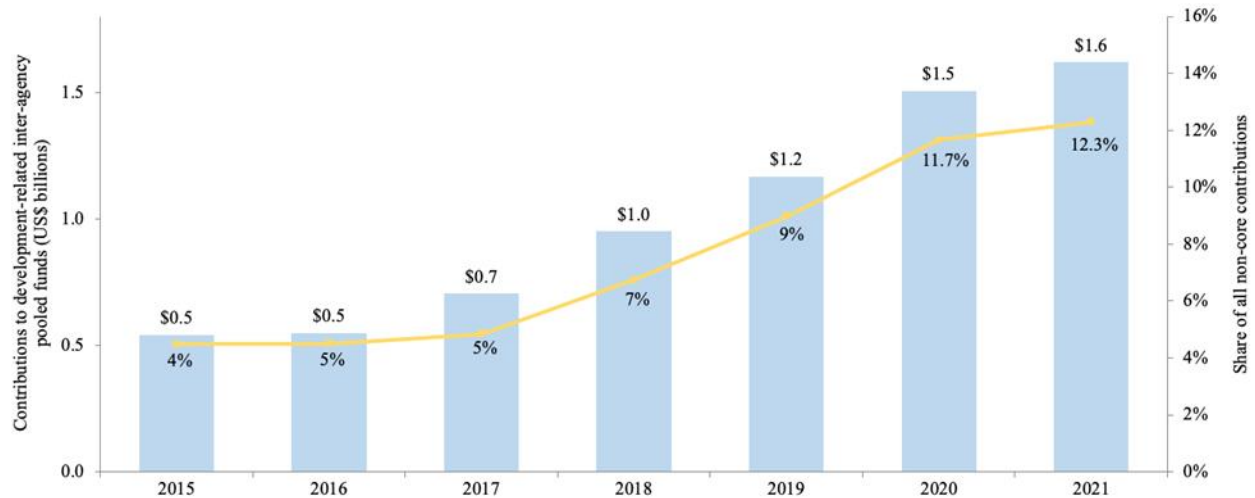
Funding of development-related inter-agency pooled funds, by type, 2021

Source: Department of Economic and Social Affairs, 2023

197. Contributions to country-level development pooled funds decreased by 5 per cent, from \$401 million in 2020 to \$379 million in 2021.⁸ This is a concern because these funds enable country teams to deliver

integrated policy support in areas critical to countries' development, such as food systems, social protection, education and energy.

Figure A
Volumes and shares of development-related non-core funding channelled through single-agency thematic funds, 2015–2021



Source: Department of Economic and Social Affairs, 2023

198. The United Nations development system has made noteworthy progress in developing common management features across inter-agency pooled funds (Funding Compact Commitment 14). In 2021, some 73 per cent of development-related inter-agency pooled funds have implemented common quality management features, up from 61 per cent in 2020.
199. Despite the overall growth in inter-agency pooled funds, some of our most critical global funds are underfunded. I note with particular concern that capitalization of the Joint Sustainable Development Goals Fund decreased by 75 per cent between 2021 and 2022, dropping from \$79 million to only \$20 million. This trend not only falls far short of the Funding Compact target of \$290 million a year but jeopardizes a vital propeller of reform. The existing level and nature of capitalization put the strategic intentions of the Fund at risk.
200. Despite being underfunded, the Joint SDG Fund has demonstrated its value by catalyzing an estimated \$2.3 billion since its creation in 2019.³⁷ A new 2023–2026 strategy positions the Joint SDG Fund as the flagship financing mechanism for SDG transformation. Under this strategy, the Fund will now allocate catalytic resources to support seven transformational areas³⁸ critical to SDG acceleration while also ensuring cross-

³⁷ The figure is as of 28 February 2023 and includes \$99.2 million in co-funding mobilized for joint programmes, \$1,693 million catalyzed through innovative financing solutions, and \$484 million catalyzed for scale-up through the Fund's integrated policy services and demonstrative impact.

³⁸ These are food systems, climate action and energy, digital transformation, decent jobs/social protection, SDG localization, internal displacement and transforming education.

cutting results for gender, youth and leaving no one behind as well as on SDG data. The strategy is informed by an [independent evaluation](#) completed by the United Nations Development System System-wide Evaluation Office. The evaluation makes recommendations on governance, management and the design of projects. It highlighted the need for improved clarity in value proposition and synergy with other pooled funds. The management response is under preparation.

201. Contributions to the Peacebuilding Fund, another vital funding instrument for integrated UN support to governments, decreased by 12 per cent, from \$195 million to \$171 million in 2022.⁷ This is far below the Funding Compact target of \$500 million annually and a reason for concern given growing peacebuilding needs across the world.

Figure XXX

Funding Compact – Member States’ commitment 2

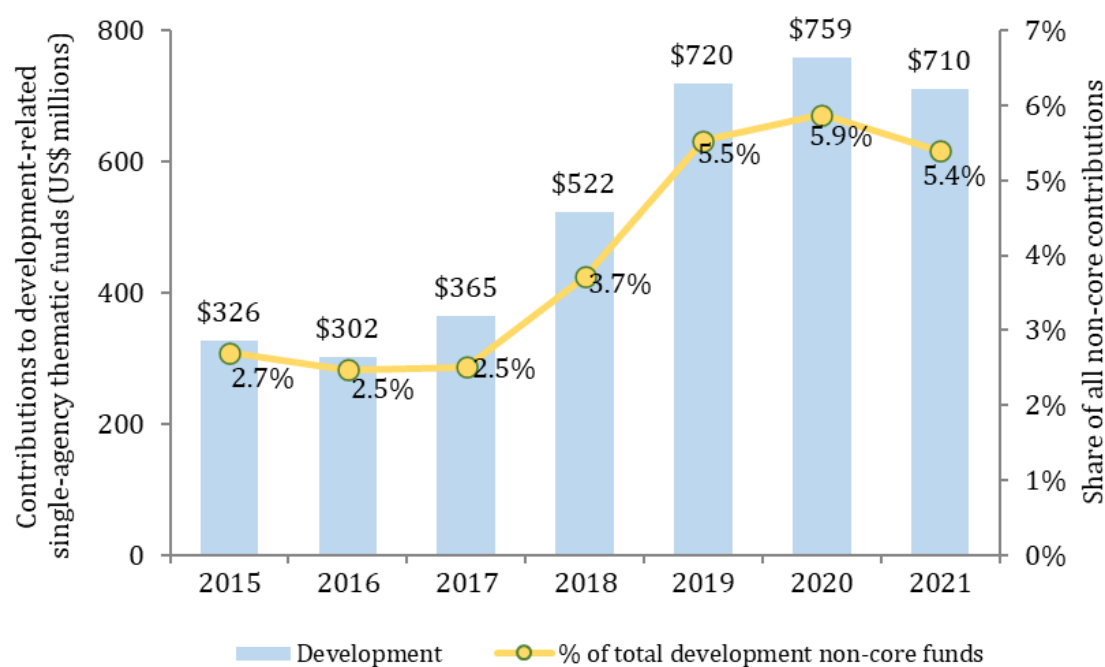
| To double the share of non-core contributions that are provided through development-related pooled funds and single-agency thematic funds | | | | |
|---|-------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|-------|
| Indicator | Baseline | Target | Latest value | Trend |
| MS 2.1. Percentage of non-core resources for development-related activities channeled through inter-agency pooled funds | 5.0% (2017) | 10.0% (2023) | 12.3% (2021) | |
| MS 2.2. Percentage of non-core resources for development-related activities channeled through single-agency thematic funds | 2.6% (2017) | 6.0% (2023) | 5.2% (2021) | |
| MS 2.3. Annual capitalization of the Joint Fund for the 2030 Agenda | \$43 million (2018) | \$290 million (2020) | \$20 million (2021) | |
| MS 2.4. Annual contributions to the Peacebuilding Fund | \$129 million (2018) | \$500 million (2020) | \$171 million (2021) | |

Source: Department of Economic and Social Affairs, 2023 Note: Trend colours: Red is stalled or slow progress. Yellow is in progress. Green is full or rapid progress.

202. Single-agency thematic funding, which enables a stronger alignment of funding with the strategic objectives of entities, declined by 6 per cent in 2021 compared to the previous year, falling to \$710 million. Such funds account for 5.4 per cent of total non-core funding for development activities (see figure w). This is short of the funding compact target of 6 per cent.

Figure w

Volumes and shares of development-related non-core funding channelled through inter-agency pooled funds, 2015–2021



Source: Department of Economic and Social Affairs, 2023

203. More action on pooled funding is needed. Country-level pooled funds and single-agency thematic funds both experienced funding decreases. Meanwhile, the Joint SDG Fund and the Peacebuilding Fund remain underfunded and increasingly so. A reversal of these trends is required if we are to realize the ambition of the Funding Compact.

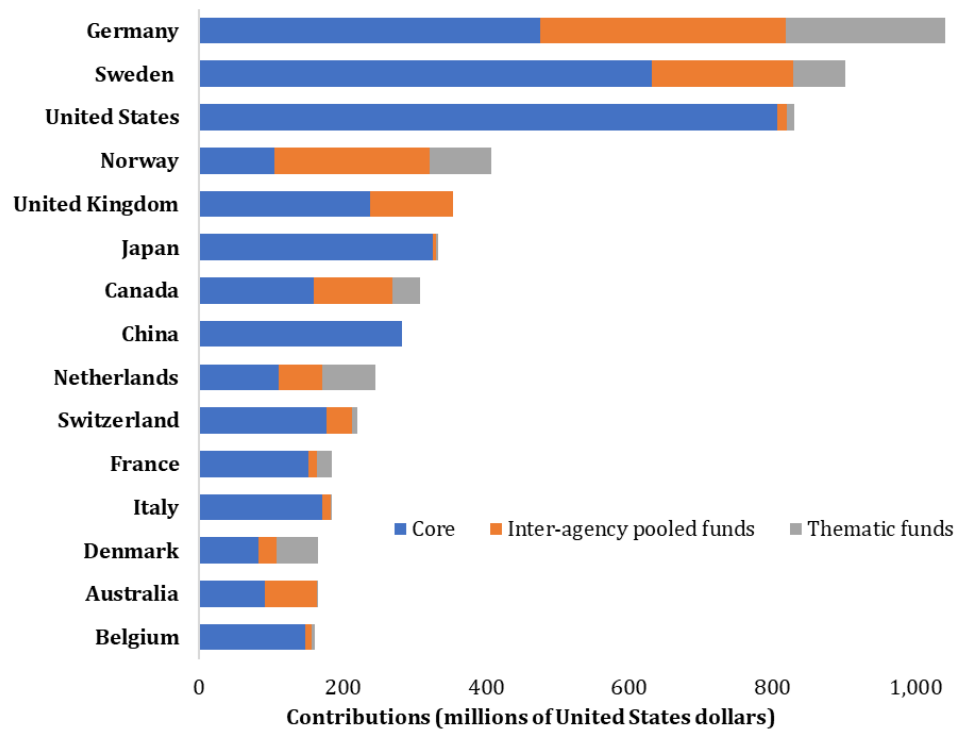
D. Funding sources require diversification

204. Member States committed to broadening sources of funding to the UN development system under the Funding Compact. This has not yet transpired. In 2021, the top five contributors of funding for development activities accounted for nearly half, or 48 per cent, of total funding received from Governments (compared to 46 per cent in 2017), and the top 10 accounted for 65 per cent of the total (66 per cent in 2017).
205. Core and flexible pooled funding remain heavily dependent on a few Member States. The five largest contributors of core funding account for 50 per cent of total core funding received from Governments. Flexible pooled funding mechanisms remain even more heavily dependent on a few contributors. The five largest contributors of inter-agency pooled development funds and agency-specific thematic development funds account for 73 per cent and 83 per cent of total government contributions to these funds, respectively.

206. Germany contributed over \$1 billion in core and pooled funding combined and was the largest contributor of UN inter-agency pooled funds and agency-specific thematic funds. Figure W shows the top 15 providers of these types of resources.

Figure W

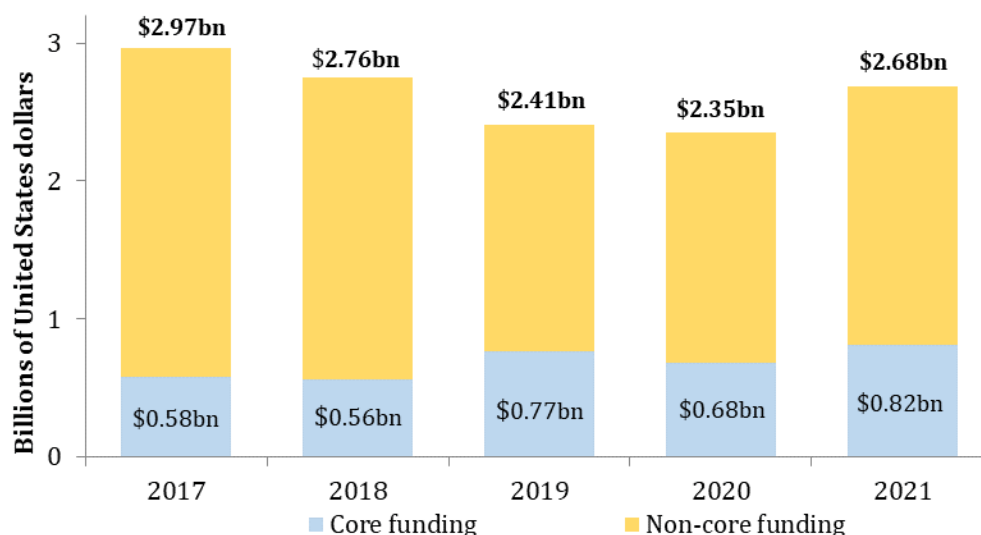
Top government providers of core and pooled resources for development activities, 2021



Source: Department of Economic and Social Affairs, 2023

207. I am pleased to report that funding received from host countries for development activities increased by 14 per cent from 2020 to 2021. This includes a 20 per cent increase in core contributions. These increases took place despite the fact that many host countries are facing the full brunt of effects from cascading food, energy and finance crises stemming from the continued impacts of COVID-19 and the Ukraine war.

Figure x
Funding for development activities from host countries, 2017-2021



Source: Department of Economic and Social Affairs, 2023

208. There were some positive trends in funding received from sources other than governments in 2021. Non-governmental donors accounted for one third of all United Nations funding for development-related activities. Increased engagement with the International Financing Institutions, including on financing for the COVID-19 recovery helped boost development funding received from this channel to \$504 million in 2021, up by 36 per cent over 2020. Funding from the private sector grew by 32 per cent to \$1.1 billion, alongside ongoing work by the United Nations development system to deepen oversight and due diligence processes.

Figure u
Funding Compact – Member States’ commitment 3

| To broaden the sources of funding support to the United Nations development system | | | | |
|--|-------------------|--------------------|--------------------|-------|
| Indicators | Baseline | Target | Latest value | Trend |
| UN 3.1. Percentage of UNSDG entities reporting an annual increase in the number of contributors of voluntary core resources | 67% (2017) | 100% (2023) | 53% (2021) | |
| UN 3.2. Number of Member State contributors to development-related inter-agency pooled funds and to single-agency thematic funds | 59 & 27 (2017) | 100 & 50 (2021) | 48 & 38 (2021) | |
| UN 3.3. Number of Member State contributors to the resident coordinator system budget | 28 (2019) | 100 (2021) | 45 (March 2023) | |

Source: Department of Economic and Social Affairs, 2023. Note: Trend colors: Red is stalled or slow progress. Yellow is in progress. Green is full or rapid progress.

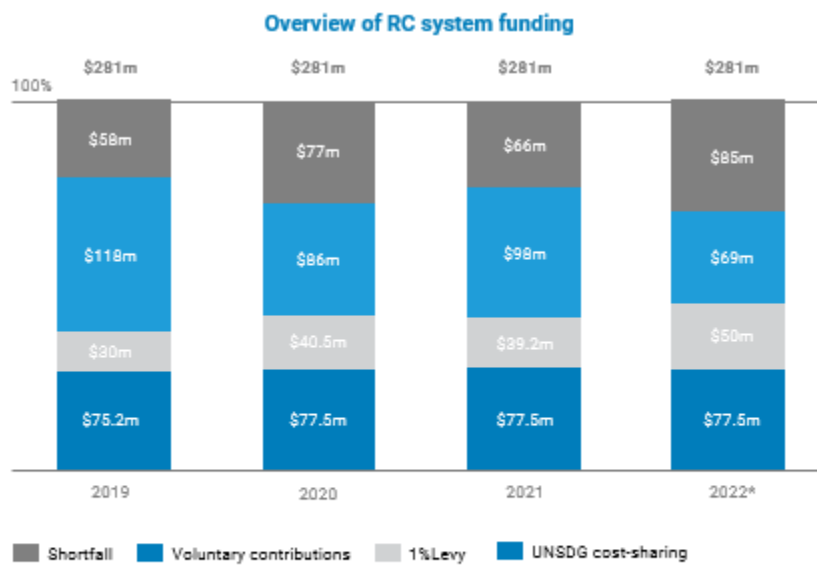
E. A continued funding gap for the resident coordinator system is now becoming the greatest risk to the consolidation of the UN development system repositioning

209. Since the establishment by the General Assembly of the hybrid funding model for the resident coordinator system, I have deployed significant efforts to ensure adequate and more predictable funding. Many Member States have also stepped up. Despite these efforts, voluntary funding for the resident coordinator system remains below ambition. In 2022, 27 contributors provided USD 69 million in total. This led to a funding gap of 85 million USD (figure x). The funding gap would have been larger had the one per cent levy and cost-sharing contributions not met their targets. The cost-sharing arrangement put in place by United Nations development system entities is indeed working well and meeting expectations. The 1% levy on tightly earmarked voluntary funding has generated over USD 50 million in 2022 and is playing its part, even if it remains well short of the USD 80 million initially envisaged in 2018. I commend those contributors making voluntary contributions to the Special Purpose Trust Fund, in particular the members of the UNSDG and those 13 Member States that provided more than their assessed contribution benchmark.³⁹
210. Yet, almost two years after the commitment made by Member States in the 2021 general assembly resolution on the review of the reinvigorated resident coordinator system, the voluntary contributions have stalled – in fact, the only significant change has been the cut of voluntary contributions by one of the main donors to the resident coordinator system, raising more questions on whether the current model is sustainable. At this point in time, just as the resident coordinator system is helping maximize the dividends of the reforms – the continued funding threatens the gains we made and jeopardizes our ability to help countries accelerate the SDGs in the next 7 years.
211. We have reached a point where the continued underfunding of the resident coordinator system is set to weaken its now robust operations – undermining the coordination required for a more effective and accountable development system; undermining our ability to attract the talent that resident coordinator leadership on the SDGs requires, and undermining the resident coordinator system’s capacity to maximize the contribution of the United Nations development system just as countries face difficult prospects of recovery from a large-scale human crisis and a make-or-break moment on SDG implementation.
212. In the past, we have been asked if the budget of the resident coordinator system could be reduced. I reiterate my conviction that this cannot be done without diluting your ambition for a transformed United Nations development system working more effectively together to deliver for your specific sustainable development needs.
213. The resident coordinator system continues to represent an efficient and lean operation, with benefits that extend way beyond its small size and the fact that it represent a small fraction of the multi-billion dollar overall UN development system spent.
214. Over the years, we have heard all the arguments on how we could strengthen reporting and transparency to help build the case- and it is our humble belief that we have met these demands. Yet, the funding situation remains unchanged.

³⁹ Belgium, Denmark, Finland, Germany, Iceland, Ireland, Liechtenstein, Luxembourg, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Sweden and Timor-Leste contributed more voluntary funding to the resident coordinator system in 2022 than they would have if this was an assessed funding stream instead of voluntary (based on USD 154 million benchmark)

215. Time has come for a definite solution. In response to the Member States request for me to “report to the General Assembly with recommendations for its consideration should the proper functioning of the reinvigorated resident coordinator system not be enabled through the generation of adequate, predictable and sustainable funding”, **I intend to request the General Assembly in a dedicated report in the second half of the year to reconsider the options I had put forward in my 2021 report entitled “Review of the functioning of the resident coordinator system: rising to the challenge and keeping the promise of the 2030 Agenda”.**
216. Specifically, I will reiterate my recommendation for the establishment of a hybrid 2.0 funding model. This model would see an increase in the share to be funded through the regular budget, while maintaining the cost-sharing arrangement and potentially the 1% levy, projected at USD 50 million a year. I remain convinced that the most logical and principled solution to the issue we face is to fund the resident coordinator system – this core development function – through a greater share of assessed contributions under the UN’s regular budget. This hybrid 2.0 model would, I believe, greatly strengthen the funding foundations of the resident coordinator system. In the coming months, I will be launching a transparent and inclusive consultation process with Member States to ensure that all views are heard before a formal proposal is submitted to the General Assembly.

Figure x
Overview of Resident Coordinator System funding (2019-2022)



Source: DCO, 2023
 *2022: the levy amount represents a projection, pending finalization in May 2023; variance in voluntary contributions may occur due to exchange rates when contributions were received.

F. The way forward on other aspects of the Funding Compact

217. In addition to the imperative of addressing the funding of the resident coordinator system, we must take steps to re-energize other dimensions of the Funding Compact and better achieve our collective objectives.
218. A new round of dialogue on the future of the Funding Compact between Member States and UNSDG entities is timely, with some targets expiring shortly and with the benefit of four years of experience to

draw on. Let us work together to identify those commitments that are most critical to building trust and to fortifying the business case for effective funding that delivers more.

219. While the Funding Compact has gained some traction in New York and at UN headquarters in general, dialogues⁴⁰ and studies⁴¹ on the Compact have revealed low awareness of the Funding Compact in capitals, where funding decisions are often made, as well as among funding partners on the ground. To address this disconnect, the United Nations development system should initiate informal country level dialogues on the Funding Compact. I direct resident coordinators to lead country teams in inviting host governments to engage in national dialogues on how to best move forward with our Funding Compact and realized our shared ambition.
220. We must also track implementation of the Funding Compact through solid indicators that measure real impacts. Practice has shown that several indicators are either unmeasurable or difficult and costly to measure, and some process-oriented indicators lack a proper measure of impact at the country level.
221. I am asking the Chair of the UNSDG to launch the dialogue with Member States following the ECOSOC/OAS. It should build on the modalities of the dialogue process that led to the original funding compact. My report to the ECOSOC/OAS next year will present the outcome of these discussions for consideration by Member States.

VII. Conclusion

222. There are reasons for Member States to be proud of the results achieved by the United Nations development system. Resident coordinators have used their convening powers to drive national discussions on key transitions for accelerating development progress, such as the energy and digital transitions. Country teams have worked together more collaboratively to deliver evidence-based policy advice that is tailored to national needs and priorities and organized by a new generation of cooperation frameworks. Programmatic support is better coordinated and efficient. The impact of the system has grown. Meanwhile, our collective commitments have generated 405 million USD in efficiencies.
223. Yet the Sustainable Development Goals remain on life support. The impact of the United Nations development system must grow further. Our support on access to finance has been immensely valuable. It has also fallen short. Funding is not flowing to where it is needed most. Member states facing crippling debt burdens are struggling to meet the needs of their people. We have made a big push at the global level through the SDG Stimulus and initiatives to reform the financial architecture. We must simultaneously lift our offer at country and regional levels.
224. At a moment of complex and intersecting crises, the United Nations development system has kept up the pace of reform and made steady progress to respond to the mandates from Member States. We are delivering more together. We are rising to the immense challenges of our times. We need to continue this momentum. There is no other option. We do not have a ‘planet B’. There is no alternative pathway to

⁴⁰ For example, at the system-wide informal consultations convened by the Development Coordination Office.

⁴¹ The Way Forward: Fulfilling the Potential of the Funding Compact at Country Level. Dag Hammarskjöld Foundation, 30 November 2021.

prosperity than through sustainable development. I will continue working with all entities hand in glove to continue growing our United Nations development system into the best that it can be.