

Charting New Directions: Shaping the Future of Sustainable Development

A UN DESA Global Policy Dialogue with members of the UN High-level Advisory Board on Economic and Social Affairs

Friday, 24 October 2025

10:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. EDT

Conference Room 6, UN Headquarters, New York
and online

Concept note

Introduction

As we enter the final five years to achieve the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, only 35 per cent of SDG targets are on track or show moderate progress. Nearly half are moving too slowly or making only marginal progress, while 18 per cent have regressed. Progress remains uneven, with many still facing extreme poverty and hunger, deepening inequalities and the impacts of climate chaos, escalating conflicts and lack of resources. Despite these challenges, new opportunities are emerging—such as technological innovations and rising awareness of the urgency of climate action—opening pathways for transformative change. To meet this moment, a bold rethinking of economic models, development strategies, and international cooperation is needed.

To help address these challenges and harness emerging opportunities, the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN DESA) will convene a Global Policy Dialogue, “**Charting New Directions: Shaping the Future of Sustainable Development,**” where members of the [UN High-level Advisory Board on Economic and Social Affairs \(HLAB\)](#) will explore different avenues for achieving and maintaining inclusive, sustainable, and forward-looking development towards and beyond 2030. In three thematic panels, leading experts will share insights on reimagining economics to foster social inclusion, identify emerging trends that will shape the decades ahead, and envision the future of sustainable development in light of global transformations. The conversation will move beyond diagnosis to offer actionable policy recommendations and innovative approaches. By convening this event on 24 October, the 80th anniversary of the UN charter, the event seeks to showcase how global cooperation can accelerate progress, strengthen resilience, and ensure that no one is left behind.

The HLAB, convened by the UN Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs, consists of global thought leaders from academia, civil society organizations, government, and the private sector who provide strategic advice to the UN on broad economic, social and environmental issues to advance the SDGs, including prospects and risks for the world economy, sustainable financing, frontier technologies, inequality, migration, gender equality, and issues associated with countries in special situations.

This dialogue is made possible by the UN Peace and Development Trust Fund. It is free to join, and all are welcome.

Format

The two-hour event will include opening remarks, videos and three panel discussions with audience Q&A. The discussions will be interactive and led by a professional moderator. The virtual audience will be invited to submit questions in advance during registration and during the session using Slido.

Location

The event will be held in Conference Room 6 at UN Headquarters in New York, and online.

Platform

The online event will be produced with the support of the UN Department of Global Communications in creating an engaging programme. It will be streamed online on Zoom, Facebook and UN WebTV. The audience can also access the online Slido platform (via QR code or provided link) to participate in the polls, submit their own questions, or vote up questions posed by others.

Language

The event will be held in English with multilingual captioning available in the six UN languages where possible. International sign interpretation will be explored.

Host/moderator

DESA will hire a professional moderator, Shakuntala Santhiran, to facilitate this event.

Programme

Introduction **(5 minutes)**

- Moderator makes welcome remarks and provides logistical information
- Moderator launches interactive poll 1

Opening remarks **(3 minutes)**

- **Li Junhua**, UN Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs

Discussion 1: The New Economics of Social Inclusion **(35 minutes)**

Speakers:

- **Ibrahim El Badawi**, Founder and Managing Director, Gulf Economic Policy & Research Center
- **Jayati Ghosh**, Professor, Department of Economics, University of Massachusetts at Amherst
- **Fadhel Kaboub**, President, Global Institute for Sustainable Prosperity; Associate Professor of Economics, Denison University
- **Danny Sriskandarajah**, Chief Executive of the New Economics Foundation, former Chief Executive of Oxfam, former Secretary General and CEO of CIVICUS
- **Kori Udovicki**, Head of the Center for Advanced Economic Studies (CEVES)

- Moderator to launch poll 2
- Moderator to ask each participant 2-3 guiding questions
- Moderator to take questions from the audience

Video 1: [UN Marks 80th Anniversary of Its Founding](#)

(1:30 minutes)

Discussion 2: Future Frontiers: Insights on Emerging Trends

(35 minutes)

Speakers:

- **Parfait Eloundou-Enyegue**, Professor of Global Development and Brooks School of Policy, Cornell University
 - **Alex Ezeh**, Professor at Drexel University, Dornsife School of Public Health; Former Director of African Population and Health Research Center (APHRC)
 - **Xiaolan Fu**, Professor of Technology and International Development, University of Oxford
 - **Raya Muttarak**, Professor of Demography, University of Bologna
 - **David Christopher Smith**, Director, Centre for Environmental Management, The University of the West Indies; Coordinator, Institute for Sustainable Development, University of the West Indies, Kingston, Jamaica
- Moderator to launch poll 4
 - Moderator to ask each participant 2-3 guiding questions
 - Moderator to take questions from the audience

Video 2: [80 Years of the UN Charter: Why It Matters More Than Ever](#)

(3:30 minutes)

Discussion 3: The Next Era of Sustainable Development

(35 minutes)

Speakers:

- **Eudine Barriteau**, former Cave Hill Campus Principal and Pro Vice-Chancellor Professor Emerita, University of West Indies Cave Hill Campus
 - **Anastasia Gage**, Professor at the Department of Global Community Health and Behavioral Sciences, School of Public Health and Tropical Medicine, Tulane University
 - **Martin Kimani**, CEO of the Africa Center, New York
 - **Jose Antonio Ocampo**, Professor, Columbia University
 - **Åsa Persson**, Strategic Advisor and Researcher, KTH Royal Institute of Technology, Climate Action Centre, and Chair of the Swedish Climate Policy Council
- Moderator to launch poll 3
 - Moderator to ask each participant 2-3 guiding questions
 - Moderator to take questions from the audience

Closing reflection

(5 minutes)

- **Navid Hanif**, UN Assistant Secretary-General for Economic Development

Wrap-up

(2 minutes)

- Moderator final remarks
- Exit survey will launch upon end of Zoom