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**Operational activities for development: operational
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**Operational activities of the United Nations
for international development cooperation:
follow-up to policy recommendations of the
General Assembly and the Council**

Implementation of General Assembly resolution 79/226 on the quadrennial comprehensive policy review of operational activities for development of the United Nations system

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

As the eightieth anniversary of the United Nations approaches, the present report offers an opportunity to take stock of the progress made in repositioning the United Nations development system to better support country efforts towards sustainable development. In 2024, the world came together at the Summit of the Future to agree how best to scale up efforts to close the gaps to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals as we near the deadline of 2030 for our globally agreed targets. While the Pact for the Future remains a key tool for accelerating progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals, the global context has shifted further since its adoption, and the world is on the precipice of a development emergency. Societies and economies are increasingly interconnected and reliant upon one another. With fewer than five years remaining before 2030, it is around the shared aspirations for poverty reduction and sustainable development and through the essential support and mechanisms provided by the United Nations that countries can come together to reach those furthest behind.

The present report sets out how the United Nations development system has supported countries in their journey to achieve their sustainable development priorities. Through a more coherent, accountable and impactful response, the United Nations development system seeks to accelerate sustainable development in countries, with the resident coordinator system at its heart. The transformative pathways^a provide a framework for the United Nations to direct resources and capacities in an integrated manner that maximizes the impact of the Organization, to

* A/80/50.



scale up the means of implementation in support of Governments across the breadth of the Goals, including in support for digital transformation and trade.

The report highlights the dividends of development system reforms for those we serve around the world but also sets out the contours of what must be refined to fully embed the vision of a reformed United Nations development system. We intend to leverage the opportunities provided by United Nations 2.0 and focus on moving forward in the areas with the greatest impact, including: (i) strengthening the focus of the in-country footprint on the key needs and priorities agreed with host countries; (ii) deepening the realization of operational improvements so as to maximize the use of development resources allocated through the United Nations system; (iii) convening Member States to support the identification of solutions and means of implementation for the Sustainable Development Goals, as well as a better use of the principles of their funding compact as a guiding light; and (iv) enabling Member States to better guide the United Nations development system through improved data and better informed system-wide evaluations.

The United Nations development system will have to become increasingly focused on the areas in which countries need the most support. The report sets out the ongoing efforts to further refine the policy expertise of the development system to best align with the needs of countries, and what more we can do to tailor the United Nations footprint in-country for better alignment with the country context, including in complex settings. This includes efforts to ensure optimal alignment of the resident coordinator system, as detailed in the report of the Chair of the United Nations Sustainable Development Group on the Development Coordination Office ([E/2025/61](#)). It draws on tangible examples that evidence the impact of the United Nations in-country and the areas in which we need to refine our support. We will also draw out the responsibilities of Member States in this respect.

In an ever-evolving global environment, the United Nations is increasingly asked to do more with fewer resources, a trajectory that is likely to be unsustainable. Total financial contributions to the United Nations development system in 2023 declined by 16 per cent, or \$9 billion, compared with 2022. Of this amount, core contributions remain unable to meet the needs of agencies or fulfil the commitment made by Member States in the funding compact. It is clear that, to date, the funding compact has not had the desired impact on the allocation of resources. To resolve this enduring trend, the report explores the avenues available to Member States for strengthening their adherence to their commitments. Accelerating implementation of the key components of the reform will be more important than ever to ensure that the system can remain impactful in an era of shrinking development budgets.

The report sets out how the system can further realize the necessary structural and behavioural shifts across the system that contribute to enhancing the coherence, efficacy, efficiency and accountability of the United Nations. While the United Nations continues to demonstrate an unyielding ambition in realizing efficiencies, with \$596.2 million reported in 2024, we will increasingly target our efforts at the areas that remain unrealized. These include enhancing our efforts in the areas of common back offices, global shared services and common premises. As part of the UN80 Initiative^b and reinvigorated efforts through the Business Innovations Group, this workstream is anticipated to remain in the spotlight in 2025. This effort regains particular importance at a time where the system must strive to free up resources for development programming.

As part of our ongoing commitment to strengthen the oversight and accountability of the United Nations development system, we have reaped the benefits of the nascent United Nations Sustainable Development Group System-wide Evaluation Office. The Office has now established a United Nations Sustainable

Development Group System-wide Evaluation Policy for its work and produced several evaluation reports, including a synthesis of the system's delivery of the 2020 quadrennial comprehensive policy review mandates. These reports provide, for the first time, a comprehensive independent evaluation of how the entirety of the United Nations Sustainable Development Group is supporting delivery of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Member States are invited to take the findings of the Office's evaluations into account when they provide guidance to the system through all appropriate bodies, including the governing bodies of the United Nations development system entities.

In March 2025, the Secretary-General launched the UN80 Initiative. Guided by the repositioning set out in General Assembly resolution [72/279](#), the initiative will enable the system to undertake a comprehensive assessment in order to identify any stones left unturned in the development system reforms.

The present report, submitted pursuant to General Assembly resolution [79/226](#), provides an update on the system-wide implementation of the quadrennial comprehensive policy review of operational activities for development of the United Nations system, and on the progress made in implementing the mandates of General Assembly resolution [72/279](#) on the repositioning of the United Nations development system. The report draws on a reservoir of data, including surveys,^c inputs from across the system and insights from evaluations to provide evidence-based analysis of progress and challenges. Financial data were sourced primarily from the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination (CEB). The report is intended to inform the discussions of the Economic and Social Council at its operational activities for development segment in May 2025, and of the General Assembly in October 2025.

^a The transformative pathways provide a path for directing the investments at country level to maximize impact across the Sustainable Development Goals. They include food systems, energy transitions and access, digital connectivity, education and skills gaps, decent jobs and social protection, and climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution.

^b The UN80 Initiative provides renewed impetus to complete existing reforms while assessing what more can be done with respect to efficiencies, the implementation of existing mandates and any necessary structural or programme realignments.

^c Four surveys were conducted in late 2024 and early 2025 by the Department of Economic and Social Affairs. They include a survey of host country Governments, which was completed by 75 per cent of countries, and a survey of Governments that make voluntary contributions to the United Nations development system, which received 71 responses. A survey of resident coordinators was completed by all 129 resident coordinators, while 1,041 United Nations country team members from 52 entities took part in a survey of country teams. A survey of headquarters of United Nations development system entities drew responses from 30 organizations, which account for 97 per cent of all spending on operational activities for development. The information management system administered by the Development Coordination Office was also used extensively as a source for the present report.

I. Introduction

1. Nine years into implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the Sustainable Development Goals are more relevant than ever. They provide a universally agreed guiding framework for the United Nations development system to support sustainable development efforts according to specific national priorities, leveraging global, regional and country-level expertise and resources.

2. The Pact for the Future represents a recommitment to bold, ambitious, accelerated, just and transformative actions to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals. As a common pledge by the international community, the Pact seeks to redouble efforts to accelerate achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals, including by addressing global financial gaps and reforming the international financial architecture. It also provides the impetus for the transformative pathways, which enable the United Nations development system and Member States to design investment and direct expertise in a catalytic manner, with resounding impacts across all the Goals.

3. The data in the present report show that the United Nations development system, through its reform, has become measurably more coherent, effective, responsive and efficient, while remaining closely aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals and enabling support for national priorities. In 2024, the quadrennial comprehensive policy review noted the realization of the main elements of reforms and set a direction for continued progress. In a survey of 121 host country Governments conducted in 2024 for the present report, 98 per cent confirmed that United Nations country teams respond effectively to their national priorities for Sustainable Development Goal delivery. Governments gave high marks to joint support for policies and institutions that guide development, and to the system's capacity to tailor responses to diverse development contexts. These and many other achievements are the result of a new generation of United Nations country teams led by a reinvigorated resident coordinator system.

4. The development system has been consistently recognized for its efforts to reach those left furthest behind and for translating international agreements into concrete action on the ground. There are also areas for improvement, including better tailoring of our presence in-country, enhanced information-sharing, aligning programming by individual agencies with key national needs and priorities, and refining business models.

5. Funding remains a core challenge for the United Nations development system. Current levels and types of funding limit its ability to deliver with the speed, scale and agility that countries need and demand. The present report presents evidence of persistent structural funding flaws that are more pressing than ever. Left unaddressed, these will undermine the ability of the United Nations development system to provide optimal support to countries. They include an overreliance on a small number of donors, limited contributions to pooled funds and a widespread preference for earmarked funds on the part of funding partners.

6. In 2025, the United Nations development system is better suited to meet current and future challenges; it is better coordinated and better equipped to address the broad spectrum of development challenges and the intersections among them. While there is more we can do to improve, we are surefooted as we commence the last mile to 2030. The UN80 Initiative launched by the Secretary-General offers renewed opportunities to ensure the realization of all expected benefits of the United Nations development system repositioning process, in line with the guidance provided by the General Assembly in its resolution [72/279](#).

II. A repositioned United Nations development system: a stronger partner for sustainable development

A. Resident coordinator system: the core of sustainable development

7. It is now clear that establishing a reinvigorated coordination system for development was essential to enable a more impactful and cohesive United Nations development system. All the data collected so far – including from independent evaluations – confirm that the resident coordinator system is delivering on the vision set out by Member States in General Assembly resolution [72/279](#).

8. As detailed in the accompanying report of the Chair of the United Nations Sustainable Development Group on the Development Coordination Office ([E/2025/61](#)), feedback from Member States on the role played by resident coordinators remains positive. Perceptions of host country Governments of the resident coordinator's authority and leadership, impartiality, management skills and role in driving common results continued to increase (88 per cent in 2024, an aggregate increase of 12 per cent across all characteristics). Favourable feedback was also provided on the resident coordinator's role in leveraging partnerships (90 per cent in 2024).

9. Representatives of contributing country Governments are similarly positive, with 84 per cent of those surveyed in 2024 agreeing or strongly agreeing that resident coordinators have led to improved coherence and a reduction in the duplication of the work of the United Nations. Ninety per cent of contributing countries agreed that the resident coordinator system had helped to scale up collective action for the Sustainable Development Goals.

10. Improved procedures for the deployment of resident coordinators were put in place in 2024 and have helped to expedite appointments and minimized vacancies. A strengthened performance management system has been developed for use, starting with 2025 appraisals. Host countries continue to indicate that this system is working, with 88 per cent reporting that resident coordinators have the right profile and skillsets. This is helped in particular by systematic consultations with host country Governments early in the selection process, allowing resident coordinator profiles to be tailored to country needs. Resource constraints affected capacity in the resident coordinator offices, required the intake of resident coordinator pool candidates to be paused in 2024 and reduced the number of candidates sponsored to take the resident coordinator assessment.

11. Survey data show improvements in the perspectives of United Nations country team members of resident coordinators and their offices. In 2024, 88 per cent of United Nations country team members agreed that resident coordinators had successfully led cross-agency support for needed changes to national policies and regulatory frameworks, an increase from 84 per cent in 2023. There were also increases in the percentage of United Nations country team members who agreed or strongly agreed that resident coordinators had helped to convene stakeholders on sustainable development financing (from 68 per cent in 2023 to 76 per cent in 2024), and helped to facilitate a focus on national opportunities for public and private investment (from 60 per cent in 2023 to 73 per cent in 2024). In its 2024 audit of the role of resident coordinators in complex settings, the Office of Internal Oversight Services also noted that, while resident coordinator leadership and support had contributed to more coherent United Nations programming in complex settings, there was insufficient capacity to meet demands and fulfil the number and scope of mandates and responsibilities.

B. United Nations country team collaboration

12. Successive reports highlight a positive trend in collaborations with United Nations country teams. In 2024, 87 per cent of host country Governments and 83 per cent of contributing country Governments agreed that entities work together more collaboratively than before the reform. There was notable progress this year on information-sharing, while some areas such as joint resource mobilization and implementation of the management and accountability framework require further improvements.

13. We continue to see improvements in information-sharing between country team members and resident coordinators. Reporting on collective results is relatively strong, with 87 per cent of resident coordinators reporting that most or all country team members share information with them on results achieved. Further progress is required on entities reporting their outreach to funding partners to resident coordinators. Sixty-five per cent of resident coordinators stated that few or no entities provide sufficient updates in this area, which is critical to enable more coherent funding in-country. While only 26 per cent of resident coordinators report that all country team members involve them in key stages of entity-specific strategic planning, that has doubled since 2023. Other areas of information-sharing also require improvement, including on meetings and discussions with government and other partners, programme implementation and entity-specific results.

14. In line with the new funding compact, joint resource mobilization by country teams continues to prove critical to reducing competition and ensuring a funding approach that is strategically aligned with national priorities. Yet 51 per cent of resident coordinators report that joint resource mobilization by country teams has remained the same or decreased in 2024 relative to previous years. Likewise, 83 per cent of resident coordinators estimate that less than a quarter of United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework budgets were allocated for joint programmes in 2024. This is not surprising, given that the incentive and accountability structures of United Nations entities, and their business models, are geared towards delivering entity-specific rather than collective results. But there are some nascent examples of agencies that are making the necessary shifts, with the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women) asking its country offices to ensure that 30 per cent of their programme portfolios are joint with other entities.

15. More concerningly, progress on implementation of the United Nations Sustainable Development Group management and accountability framework has somewhat stalled. This instrument, which outlines the working modalities and accountability lines of development coordination at all levels, remains essential in turning the provisions of landmark General Assembly resolution [72/279](#) into reality in all United Nations country teams. Various challenges have been identified. United Nations staff have varying levels of awareness of the framework, and some perceive it to be complex or allowing dual interpretations. Adherence to the framework is not standardized across entities, with some key areas of dual accountability – such as inviting resident coordinators to provide input on the performance assessments of country representatives – not being fully realized.

16. Against this backdrop, the United Nations Sustainable Development Group has initiated a review of the management and accountability framework that will unfold throughout 2025. The review will draw on existing evidence and data, as well as the views and experiences of staff, with the aim of simplifying the management and accountability framework and clarifying expectations and specific arrangements. Following the outcome of this review and the release of a revised framework, I count

on all governing bodies of United Nations development entities to ensure its full implementation.

C. Strategic alignment with countries' priorities and needs through United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Frameworks and tailored United Nations country team programmes and configuration

17. Host Governments continue to consider the priorities set out in United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Frameworks to be closely aligned with their country's development needs and priorities (98 per cent in 2024). However, the picture is more complicated regarding the extent to which actual entity-specific activities and results are aligned with the Cooperation Frameworks. Resident coordinators estimate that 79 per cent of entity-specific country programming instruments are aligned with the Cooperation Framework. However, deeper analysis suggests that the "alignment" is often very soft, at a broad level, and does not translate into genuine derivation into agency-specific plans.

18. This is confirmed by the emerging results from the forthcoming system-wide evaluation on progress towards a new generation of United Nations country teams, which finds little evidence that the substance of these programmes is much affected by the Cooperation Framework and its preparation process. "Derivation" remains largely an administrative exercise, in part due to the broad nature of Cooperation Framework documents, weak mechanisms for derivation and an inconsistent role for the resident coordinator in entities' strategic planning.

19. The evaluation also finds that use of the tools that support Cooperation Framework implementation (such as joint workplans, joint resource mobilization strategies and coordination structures) by the entities has been weak. In this context, only 43 per cent of host Governments rated the focus on common results by United Nations development entities as fully adequate in 2024.

20. Another area that requires careful reflection is the configuration of United Nations country teams, tailored to country priorities and needs. In 2024, all country teams that launched a new Cooperation Framework conducted an associated configuration exercise, an increase from 83 per cent in 2023. Eighty-nine per cent of host country Governments agreed that country team configurations were suited to the specific country needs and challenges, compared with 87 per cent in 2023. The system-wide evaluation did find that country team configuration exercises had expanded the engagement of non-resident entities at the country level. But the preliminary findings of the evaluation indicate that these exercises have not been able to create a more tailored, needs-based country presence. Entities' internal decisions on business models and staffing were disconnected from the configuration exercise.

21. While the final evaluation report, and the management response, are forthcoming, it is evident that dedicated efforts are required across the development system to ensure coherent, tailored support for countries, which includes strengthened access to the full range of assets and expertise offered by the United Nations, including policy expertise. Guidance and accountabilities for delivery of the Cooperation Framework must be clear. With support and oversight from governing bodies, development entities must step up their efforts to ensure that their business models, policies and guidance provide the right incentive structures and capacities for system-wide responses. I trust that leaders across United Nations development entities will carefully consider the findings of the evaluation and take steps to address

these issues as a matter of priority throughout 2025 and 2026, under the guidance of their governing bodies.

D. Leveraging regional cooperation, expertise and policy advice

22. Regional collaborative platforms¹ have been established as part of the repositioning of the United Nations development system to effectively pool system-wide regional expertise and ensure coordinated, coherent and efficient action to support specific national and transboundary needs in each region. The annual reports produced by the platforms provide a comprehensive picture of their work.

23. In 2024, the Regional Collaborative Platform for Arab States hosted the Regional Food Systems Forum, which launched the Transformational Impact Partnership to catalyse innovative financing for agrifood projects. It secured policy commitments from 13 countries through the “learning to earning” initiative, addressing youth unemployment and collaborating with the League of Arab States to embed commitments in those countries’ processes. To improve operational efficiency, the Platform established 10 long-term agreements and promoted common premises and back-office solutions.

24. The Regional Collaborative Platform for Asia and the Pacific supported over 20 countries in updating their nationally determined contributions to reduce national emissions and adapt to the impacts of climate change, through science-policy dialogues and technical assessments. By streamlining knowledge-sharing and leveraging specialized expertise from the United Nations system, the Platform supported over 40 countries in improving their technical capacity on decarbonization, reporting on greenhouse gas emissions and integrating clean energy transitions into their national planning processes. The Platform convened over 1,800 stakeholders at the Early Warnings for All multi-stakeholder forum, advancing early warning systems across the region, which resulted in more coordinated disaster preparedness. It also supported the provision of expertise to help Fiji to develop the first national anticipatory action framework in the Pacific region with innovative parametric insurance solutions.

25. The Regional Collaborative Platform for Europe and Central Asia leveraged system-wide policy expertise to strengthen food systems in Kazakhstan and Türkiye through the Convergence Initiative, enabling countries to integrate national food systems transformation and climate action. The Platform also contributed to the enhancement of healthcare for refugees in the Republic of Moldova, Ukraine and Eastern Europe through the EU4Health migration project. Biodiversity and water management initiatives were implemented in Central Asia and the South Caucasus through the mapping and analysis of water-related programmes, identifying programmatic and policy entry points for joint United Nations action, while Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Uzbekistan benefited from system-wide technical support to advance social protection reforms.

26. The Regional Collaborative Platform for Latin America and the Caribbean developed a strategy to enable Caribbean countries to access innovative financing and strengthen their economic resilience. In response to evolving mixed movements, the

¹ The regional collaborative platforms are internal coordination mechanisms established through the United Nations development system reform to enhance system-wide coherence and collaboration at the regional level. Each platform is chaired by the Deputy Secretary-General and co-chaired by two Vice-Chairs – the Executive Secretary of the relevant regional economic commission and the Regional Director of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). The platforms bring together regional directors of United Nations development entities to support collective action across the system.

Platform provided country teams with critical migration and displacement data to guide more targeted policy and programmatic responses. It also launched an inclusive growth tracker to enhance the ability of United Nations country teams to make better data-driven policy decisions. The Platform provided resident coordinators with actionable policy advice on Sustainable Development Goal 16 and prison reform and contributed to development of the Ibero-American agreement on access to justice. The Regional Gender Equality Profile also bolstered United Nations responsiveness, programming and coordination on gender equality. The Platform also implemented efficiency measures, leading to savings of \$8.4 million.

27. The Regional Collaborative Platform for Africa coordinated United Nations regional capacity and funding from the Joint Sustainable Development Goal Fund in Central Sahel to provide cross-border strategic surge support to United Nations country teams, enabling the co-creation with Governments of 10 flagship programmes in Burkina Faso, Mali and the Niger. In addition, the Platform facilitated regional expertise and supported the Governments of Liberia and South Africa in aligning their development priorities for Sustainable Development Goal acceleration.

28. The potential of regional collaborative platforms continues to be acknowledged by resident coordinators and country teams, although in many areas these mechanisms are still to live up to the expectations placed on them by Member States and United Nations country teams alike. The proportion of resident coordinators reporting regional collaborative platforms as efficient for policy discussions and the exchange of experiences increased by 16 percentage points to 49 per cent in 2024; however, further progress is needed to ensure that the platforms are able to meet requests by United Nations country teams for policy support or surge capacity at the pace and quality required. Efforts to further calibrate the role of the platforms should continue to draw on the region-specific expertise, institutional legitimacy and convening capacities of regional commissions, which continue to play a vital role in policy dialogue and regional consensus-building. The Chair of the regional collaborative platforms will continue to work closely with the respective Vice-Chairs (the Executive Secretary of the regional commission in question and the Regional Director of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)) to identify adjustments that could enhance the support provided by the platforms to the country teams.

E. Achieving efficiencies across business operations to maximize the impact of the United Nations system

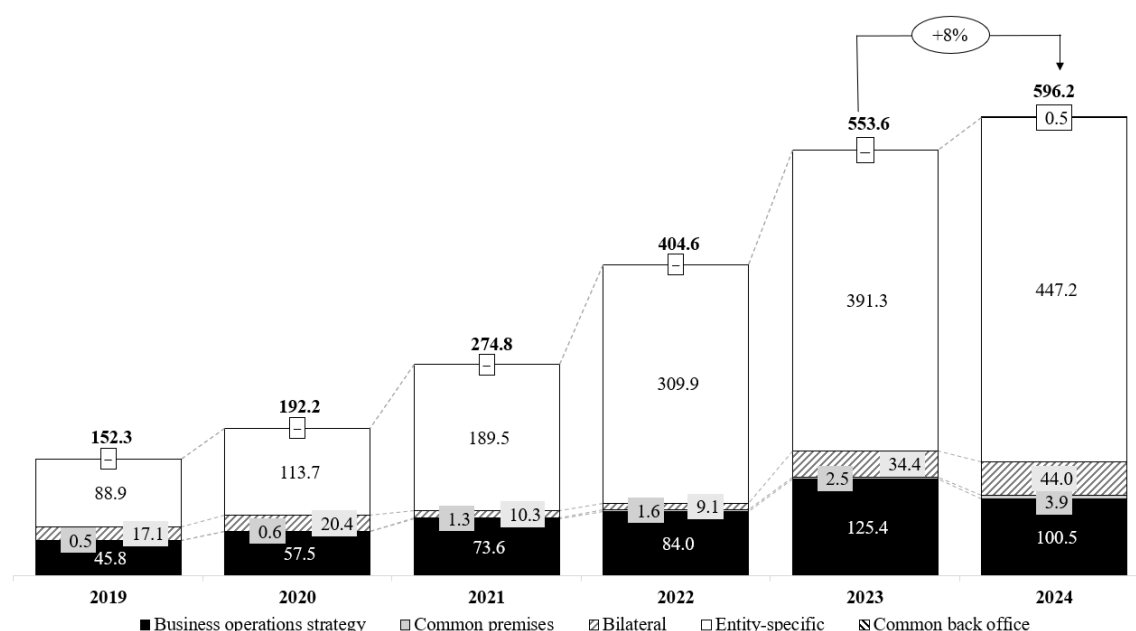
29. Stemming from my report on repositioning the United Nations development system ([A/72/124-E/2018/3](#)), the efficiency initiatives have been rooted in efforts to ensure a more effective use of resources, strengthen accountability and improve alignment with the 2030 Agenda to ultimately deliver in a more impactful manner for Member States. Efforts to enhance the efficiency of business operations across the United Nations development system remain a central focus, with the efficiency road map for 2022–2024 guiding significant progress. In 2024, United Nations Sustainable Development Group entities reported \$596.2 million in realized efficiency gains, exceeding the initial target of \$310 million savings outlined in the road map. This marks an increase of \$42.6 million from the previous year and positions the system on track to meet the \$620 million target set for 2028. Since 2022, the system has realized \$958 million in efficiency gains. A substantial portion of these savings in 2024 came from entity-specific initiatives, such as the United Nations Booking Hub, which saved \$5.7 million by providing shared mobility, accommodation and medical services across 116 countries. While these gains are valuable, there is a growing need to focus on system-wide efforts, particularly common back offices, to realize further efficiencies.

30. In 2024, 129 United Nations country teams reported efficiencies totalling \$100.5 million, nearly matching the projected \$105 million savings for the year. The majority of these efficiencies came from services such as common premises management, travel and conference services. The implementation of common back offices gained momentum, with new initiatives launched in Brazil, Kenya, the United Republic of Tanzania and Viet Nam, which have already resulted in savings. For example, in Viet Nam, the initial savings amounted to \$0.5 million in 2024, while in Brazil, the common back office now provides 86 services to 15 United Nations entities, benefiting approximately 1,200 United Nations personnel. These efforts are being scaled up, with additional common back offices planned for countries such as Bangladesh, Colombia, Indonesia and others.

31. The United Nations development system has also increased its focus on optimizing common premises, with 32 per cent of United Nations buildings now operating as common premises, an increase from 31 per cent in 2023. This shift has helped to reduce rental costs, generating \$3.9 million in savings in 2024. Although challenges persist, including funding gaps and technical obstacles related to construction permits, ongoing initiatives in countries such as Algeria, Egypt and Senegal are helping to expand the number of common premises. In addition, there has been a concerted effort to increase ownership of business operations strategies, with United Nations Sustainable Development Group entities taking on greater responsibility for monitoring, reporting and quality assurance. The Development Coordination Office continues to support capacity-building and data analytics to ensure successful implementation.

32. Looking ahead, the next phase of the efficiency road map will emphasize the systematization of 15 high-impact common services, such as travel, cleaning and security services. The United Nations is also moving towards expanding global shared services, consolidating 10 new location-independent services, including recruitment and payroll. Leveraging data and analytics will be central to further optimizing global shared services, particularly with the introduction of low-emission vehicles and artificial intelligence-driven improvements. At a time of financial constraints in many United Nations entities, it is essential to streamline business operations and reduce administrative costs in order to free up additional resources for development programmes. The consolidation of back office functions has the potential to significantly reduce system-wide administrative expenses, thus contributing to increased efficiency and better resource allocation for the Sustainable Development Goals.

Figure 1
Efficiencies reported by year, as at 7 April 2025
 (Millions of United States dollars)



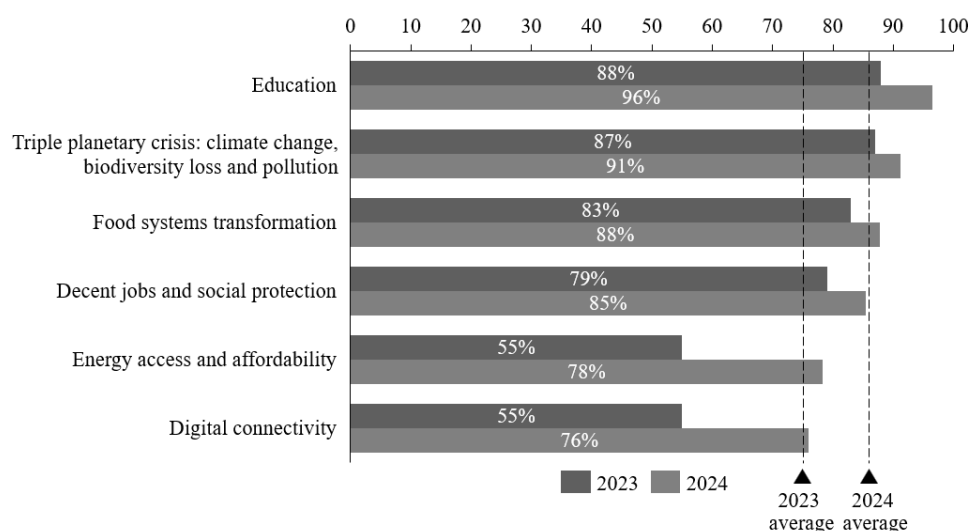
Source: United Nations Sustainable Development Group Business Innovations Group, 2024.

III. Accelerated action for the Sustainable Development Goals

33. The adoption of the Pact for the Future in September 2024 reaffirmed global solidarity and the commitment to sustainable development, peace and human rights. The United Nations development system is building on this momentum to accelerate progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals, with a focus on closing investment gaps in critical areas.

34. The six transformative pathways – food systems transformation, energy transitions and access, digital connectivity, education and skills development, decent jobs and social protection, and addressing the triple planetary crisis of climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution – along with the four enablers, offer clear entry points for scaling up to achieve greater impact and results. Host country Governments have rated United Nations support in these areas highly (86 per cent of host country Governments rating support as effective), an 11 percentage point increase in satisfaction from 2023 to 2024. Areas such as energy access and digital connectivity still require further attention; however, efforts to scale up support were noted in 2024 and are reflected in the survey results (see figure 2).

Figure 2
Governments that rated the United Nations country teams as effective on the six transformative pathways



Source: Department of Economic and Social Affairs survey of Governments, 2023 and 2024.

1. Food systems

35. Food systems transformation is crucial for the overall achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals. In the 2024 quadrennial comprehensive policy review, Member States made a new request for the United Nations development system to provide coherent support to help to build sustainable food systems. United Nations entities are already playing a pivotal role; in 2024, 85 per cent reported providing direct support to countries in this area. At the country level, resident coordinators play a key role in supporting Member States in preparing for the upcoming second United Nations Food Systems Summit Stocktake, to be held in Addis Ababa in July 2025.

36. Progress towards ending hunger and food insecurity more generally has stalled since 2021, initially due to the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic and later compounded by the climate crisis and geopolitical tensions. The global food security crisis remains a critical challenge, with an estimated 713 million to 757 million people facing hunger, 2.33 billion experiencing moderate or severe food insecurity and 193 million malnourished children.

37. United Nations efforts to combat food insecurity and malnutrition reached over 150 million people in 2024. The World Food Programme's largest programme on food assistance, cash-based transfers and capacity-strengthening reached 107 million people. The School Meals Coalition, launched at the 2021 United Nations Food Systems Summit, has gained the backing of 98 Member States and 129 partners, reinforcing global commitments to end malnutrition and provide every child with nutritious school meals by 2030. United Nations country teams played an active role in its implementation; in Guatemala, for example, the United Nations country team worked with national actors and the national school feeding programme to provide nutritious meals to children and advance sustainable agriculture by integrating key actors, including small-scale farmers and the private sector, into the food supply chain.

38. The United Nations Food Systems Coordination Hub is at the centre of the system-wide response, supporting over 55 countries in 2024. It launched the Convergence Initiative at the twenty-eighth session of the Conference of the Parties

to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change to advance the objectives of the United Arab Emirates Declaration on Sustainable Agriculture, Resilient Food Systems and Climate Action. The Hub has engaged with the private sector in support of the Secretary-General's call to action for accelerated food systems transformation. The initiative assists countries through groups supported by resident coordinators to align multisectoral policies on food systems transformation pathways with nationally determined contributions and national adaptation plans ahead of the thirtieth session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, to be held in Brazil in November 2025.

39. Entities have scaled up initiatives to improve the tracking of food systems transformation. The Food Systems Countdown Initiative, led by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations and United Nations Sustainable Development Group partners, has built a science-based system to assess global food system performance, offering country-specific guidance and evidence.

40. Innovative financing mechanisms have been supporting food systems transformation. In 2024, the Joint Sustainable Development Goals Fund created the food systems window to invest in integrated programming through joint programmes in 18 countries, paired with national efforts to leverage a multiplier effect of up to five times the initial funding. The Financial Flows to Food Systems tool, spearheaded by the International Fund for Agricultural Development and the World Bank, was scaled up to 12 countries in 2024 from its pilot (3 countries) in 2023. The tool empowers Governments and donors with financial intelligence on food finance – insights, data and trends – to inform decisions, anticipate challenges and minimize risk, with a focus on private sector flows.

41. To better respond to climate change, related disasters and unsustainable agricultural practices exacerbating food insecurity, the United Nations development system has enhanced its response through forecasting technologies, early warning and early action systems, and more robust data to inform action. In 2024, cash-based transfers and insurance mechanisms supported 9.2 million people in mitigating climate shocks and adapting to increasingly volatile conditions. Financial shortfalls limit the ability of developing countries to scale up food security programmes and invest in sustainable farming practices, while climate change continues to disrupt agricultural production.

42. At the country level, the United Nations development system continues to integrate food insecurity and sustainable food system transitions into United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Frameworks aligned with national priorities. In 2024, 88 per cent of host country Government survey respondents found United Nations country teams to be effective in supporting food system transitions, a 5 percentage point improvement from the previous year. The second United Nations Food Systems Summit Stocktake taking place in Addis Ababa in July 2025 presents an opportunity to learn from progress, track commitments, foster partnerships and unlock further investment opportunities. The United Nations development system will build on the outcomes of the stocktaking exercise to bolster support to countries, strengthen financing and refine monitoring frameworks in order to accelerate the transformation towards sustainable food systems.

2. Energy transitions and access

43. Energy affordability and access are critical for countries' development pathways. The 2024 quadrennial comprehensive policy review noted, in particular, the need to strengthen assistance to achieve universal access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all in Africa. However, global challenges, coupled with limited technical support and social protection measures, have affected

countries' sustainable energy transitions unevenly, with marked gaps in renewable energy investments and employment, particularly in Africa. While barriers to electricity access and clean energy infrastructure remain across developing regions, investments in renewable energy have increased in several emerging and developing economies. The International Energy Agency expects global clean energy investment to exceed \$2 trillion for the first time in 2024.

44. In 2022, the number of people without electricity rose for the first time in over a decade, reaching 685.2 million, with no gains in the global access rate of 91 per cent. Those lacking energy access are heavily concentrated in sub-Saharan Africa and the least developed countries, many of which are challenged by the protracted impacts of global crises, fragility and conflict. If current trends persist, an estimated 660 million people will remain without electricity by 2030. Moreover, 2.1 billion people worldwide still lack access to clean cooking fuels, and based on current trends, one in five people will still be without clean cooking solutions by 2030, falling far short of universal access.

45. UN-Energy has facilitated United Nations system-wide support on energy and played a key role in accelerating national energy transitions to fuel sustainable development pathways. It continues to facilitate energy compacts, a key initiative, with financial pledges totalling over \$1.4 trillion through 2024, compared with \$400 billion in 2021. From 2021 to 2024, energy compact actions garnered more than \$201 billion, with two thirds of the total invested in 2024, demonstrating how achieving Sustainable Development Goal 7 brings tangible benefits, generating decent work, economic growth and climate action while also improving access to health, food systems, sustainable urban development and transport. As a member of UN-Energy, Sustainable Energy For All has offered technical and financial support to countries in creating energy transition and investment plans to build energy systems that support socioeconomic development and achieve net-zero emissions. The process is country-led using analytics, engagement and capacity-building to facilitate investment plans to help countries to engage with investors and development institutions.

46. Mission 300, a private-public collaboration between the World Bank, the African Development Bank and Sustainable Energy For All, among others, can de-risk investments and mobilize capital to support distributed renewable energy, grid infrastructure and cross-border energy trade. Building on current momentum, UN-Energy has intensified support through inter-agency collaboration and worked closely with Member States to deploy shared resources and expertise. In 2024, over 78 per cent of host country Governments rated energy-related support from United Nations country teams as effective – an increase from 55 per cent in 2023. Since 2022, 55 million people have gained access to clean, affordable and sustainable energy through efforts supported by the United Nations development system.

47. Fully achieving universal energy access and meeting Sustainable Development Goal 7 by 2030 calls for partnerships, innovative financing and further support to address persistent gaps in energy access and guide a just transition that includes the most vulnerable populations. Decentralized but distributed renewable energy solutions can extend vital electricity services to remote, unserved communities. The United Nations development system supports developing countries in strengthening cross-sectoral partnerships and financing models in order to lower capital costs and attract clean energy investment. Through United Nations country teams and resident coordinators, there has been more support for reviewing, assessing and developing adequate regulatory frameworks that de-risk energy transition investments. For the least developed countries, this support should go hand in hand with capacity-building,

mobilizing international public finance for energy to build infrastructure and narrow the access gap in the clean energy transition.

3. Digital connectivity

48. The 2024 quadrennial comprehensive policy review tasks the United Nations development system with scaling up integrated policy support for host countries to improve digital connectivity. This includes assistance in investing in digital public infrastructure and harnessing artificial intelligence, alongside scaled-up international cooperation and financing for digital readiness.

49. In the Global Digital Compact,² Member States also recognized digital connectivity as crucial to fast-tracking progress on the Sustainable Development Goals,³ eradicating poverty and leaving no one behind. Yet 2.6 billion people still lack Internet access, particularly in low-income countries, where only an estimated one in four people (27 per cent) is online. The United Nations development system is taking steps to better support countries through the provision of integrated policy advice, the facilitation of capacity-building and the promotion of technology transfer on digital connectivity, while ensuring rights-based approaches and adapting to emerging digital societies. This complements global United Nations efforts to close the digital divide, including with respect to emerging technologies such as artificial intelligence, and to ensure that countries and people/communities are not left behind as the frontier expands.

50. The Global Digital Compact reaffirms the importance of universal digital connectivity and the safety of digital spaces. The new Office for Digital and Emerging Technologies, established by the General Assembly on 1 January 2025, will support system-wide follow-up and implementation of the Compact. The United Nations released the Universal Digital Public Infrastructure Safeguards Framework in 2024,⁴ which is aimed at safety and inclusion in digital public infrastructure in line with the Sustainable Development Goals. The final report of the High-level Advisory Body on Artificial Intelligence⁵ calls for increased capacity to manage this technology and its vast implications, including through the United Nations playing a key role in steering new global standards based on a coordinated, system-wide response.

51. The Joint Sustainable Development Goals Fund catalyses action by United Nations country teams through its digital transformation window, and has secured over \$66 million for joint programmes since 2022, with almost 40 per cent co-funded by partners. To date, 22 joint programmes have been approved, with a third planned for implementation in least developed or landlocked developing countries.

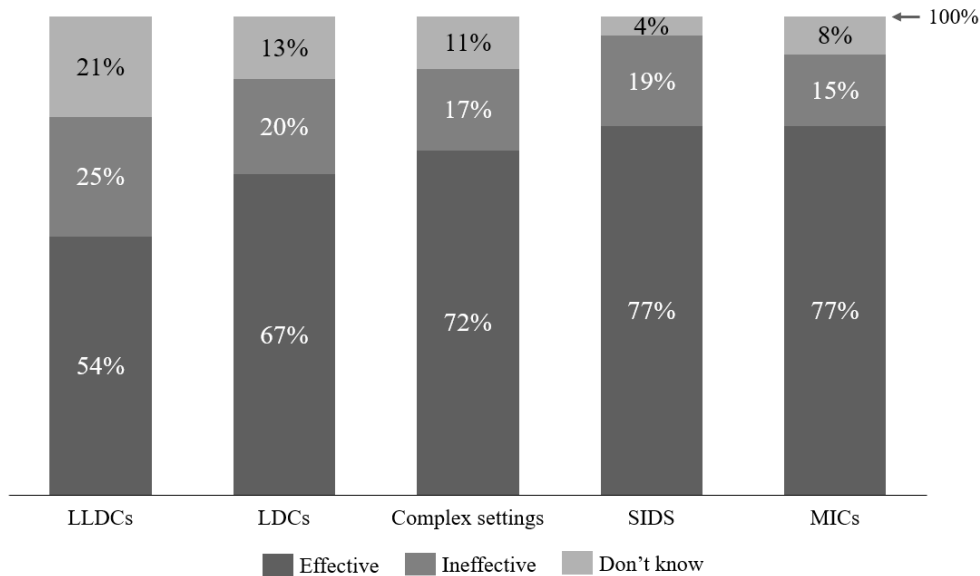
² General Assembly resolution 79/1, annex I.

³ The Sustainable Development Goal Digital Acceleration Agenda, launched by the International Telecommunication Union and UNDP, shows how digital solutions can accelerate progress on at least 70 per cent of the Sustainable Development Goal targets. See www.sdg-digital.org/accelerationagenda.

⁴ See www.dpi-safeguards.org/.

⁵ *Governing AI for Humanity* (United Nations publication, 2024).

Figure 3
Government feedback on the effectiveness of United Nations country team support for digital connectivity, by country group

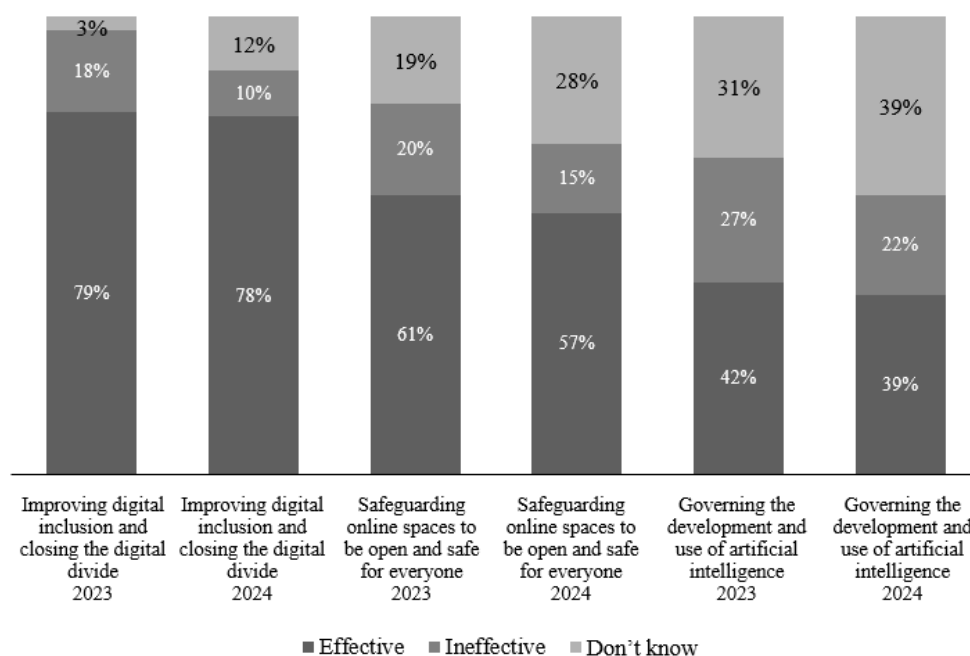


Source: Department of Economic and Social Affairs survey of Governments, 2024.

Abbreviations: LLDCs, landlocked developing countries; LDCs, least developed countries; SIDS, small island developing States; MICs, middle-income countries.

52. A large majority of host country Governments (78 per cent) considered United Nations development system support for improving digital inclusion and closing the digital divide as effective, similar to 2023 rates (see figure 4). Rates were lower with respect to governing the development and use of artificial intelligence. Less than half of countries found United Nations support effective, although nearly 40 per cent of government respondents did not have enough information to respond. One example of such support, the Partner2Connect Digital Coalition led by the International Telecommunication Union, mobilized over 1,000 pledges from 466 entities totalling approximately \$60 billion in new partnerships and commitments to achieving universal connectivity.

Figure 4
Government feedback on the effectiveness of United Nations country team support for digital technology and cooperation



Source: Department of Economic and Social Affairs survey of Governments, 2023 and 2024.

53. Over half of resident coordinators (61 per cent) reported benefiting from support for digital transition from the headquarters of United Nations entities, continuing a trend observed since 2021. Nevertheless, there is room for improvement with respect to these challenges.

54. During the 2024 quadrennial review cycle, the United Nations development system will intensify its efforts to support Governments facing emerging challenges and opportunities in the digital domain. This includes leveraging where possible the vision set out in the Global Digital Compact, absorbing and adapting to frontier and disruptive technologies, improving digital infrastructure, increasing digital literacy and opening up access to new technologies. United Nations support can be scaled up at the country level and refocused to meet policymaker demands for standards and norms to manage security and information integrity risks.⁶ Attention must be given to preventing the emergence of a new, and exacerbating the current, digital divide through artificial intelligence.⁷

4. Education and skills gaps

55. Since 2019, Sustainable Development Goal 4 has been consistently ranked by host country Governments as among the top five areas in which the contribution of the United Nations has been most significant. The 2024 quadrennial comprehensive policy review calls upon the United Nations development system to continue improving its support to Member States in developing their capacities to ensure access to inclusive, safe and equitable quality education. Yet Sustainable Development Goal 4 remains

⁶ *Governing AI for Humanity* (United Nations publication, 2024), p. 28.

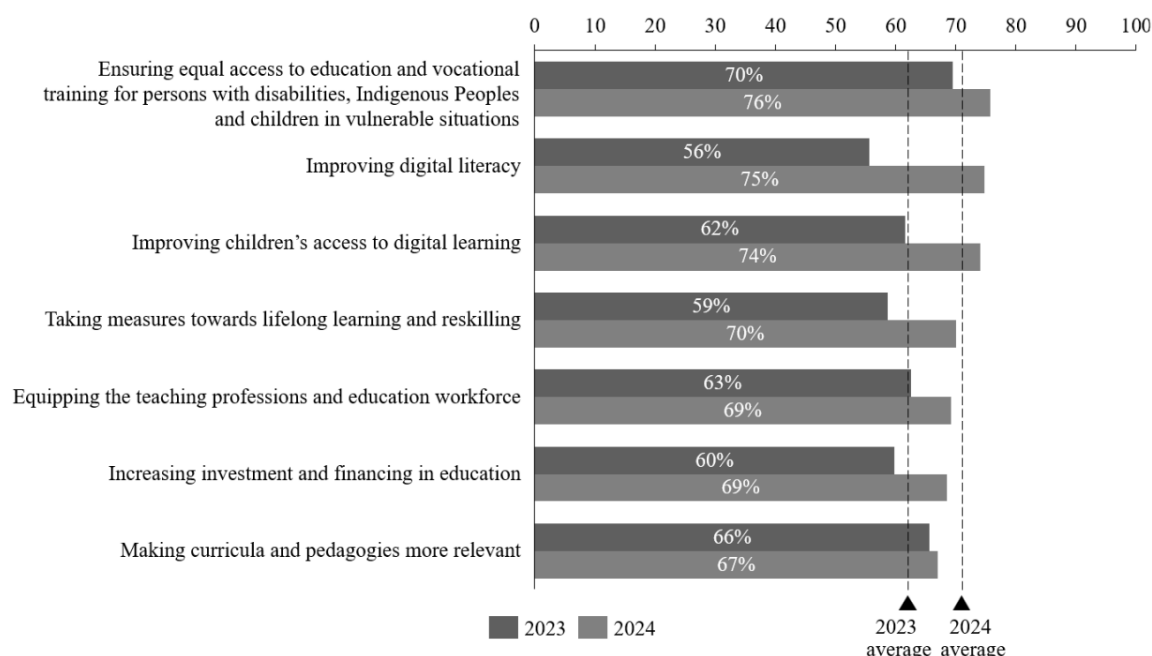
⁷ *Mind the AI Divide: Shaping a Global Perspective on the Future of Work* (United Nations publication, 2024), foreword.

severely off track. Progress is slow, with 251 million children out of school and disparities persisting across regions. Increased investment is urgently needed.

56. Based on host country Government surveys in 2024, on average over 70 per cent of Governments rated United Nations country team support for education as effective across seven priority areas (see figure 5). Rates were highest for United Nations support in ensuring equal access to education and reflect a significant increase in effectiveness with regard to improving digital literacy (19 percentage points from the previous year).

Figure 5

Areas in which Governments rated education support from the United Nations country team as effective



Source: Department of Economic and Social Affairs survey of Governments, 2023 and 2024.

57. Following the Transforming Education Summit in 2022, 140 countries put forward national commitments aimed at addressing the learning crisis and increasing investment. The Fortaleza Declaration, adopted at the 2024 Global Education Meeting in Brazil and supported by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), reaffirmed national commitments to equitable and inclusive education with a particular emphasis on critical levers (such as equity and access). Reaching those in the most vulnerable groups remains a core priority, including those in conflict settings, refugees, internally displaced persons, girls and persons with disabilities.

58. The Foundational Learning Action Tracker 2024 of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) has shown progress in learning assessments and defining learning outcomes across the 123 low- and middle-income countries covered. Tangible results are also emerging in ensuring safe education environments. The End School-related Gender-based Violence programme in Sierra Leone expanded from 21 to 617 schools, reaching 147,246 adolescents, 54 per cent of whom were girls. The programme has yielded significant returns in increased safety and positive gender attitudes, while reports of sexual violence among adolescents have declined.

59. United Nations country teams are working with Member States to implement the recommendations of the High-Level Panel on the Teaching Profession to address the 44 million global teacher shortage.⁸ The advocacy around the recommendations resulted in notable policy improvements. In Mongolia, this resulted in an increase of up to 30 per cent in teachers' salaries and a growth in funding for education. In Indonesia, over 1 million teachers have been given permanent contracts offering job security and improved working conditions. The United Nations development system will continue working with stakeholders to promote long-term reforms, including high-quality teacher training and development.

60. Initiatives supported by United Nations entities such as the Global Partnership for Education and Giga continue to be instrumental in enhancing education access and quality. The Gateways to Public Digital Learning initiative now includes 17 countries. In Bhutan, the country team played a pivotal role in advancing digital education, ensuring that every school has Internet connectivity, surpassing the global average.

61. Closing the annual \$97 billion gap in education financing is critical. Low-income countries invested only \$55 per learner in 2022 compared with \$8,543 in high-income countries.⁹ Some 3.3 billion people live in countries that spend more on debt interest payments than on education.¹⁰ The 2025 Conference on Financing for Development and the Second World Summit for Social Development will be key opportunities to address the education financing gap and scale up solutions to transform education.

5. Decent jobs and social protection

62. The 2024 quadrennial comprehensive policy review called for continued United Nations support in developing and implementing social protection systems for all. Indeed, decent jobs and social protection transformation are essential to breaking the cycle of extreme poverty for over 712 million people worldwide.¹¹ For the first time ever, over half (52.4 per cent) of the global population is covered by at least one social protection benefit, but 3.8 billion people still lack any form of social protection, including more than 9 in 10 people in low-income countries.¹²

63. In the 2024 survey, most host country Governments found United Nations country team support effective for implementing national social protection systems and improving social protection policy, administration and delivery. The share was slightly lower concerning support for mobilizing resources for social protection (see figure 6).

⁸ UNESCO and International Task Force on Teachers for Education 2030, *Global Report on Teachers: addressing teacher shortages and transforming the profession* (Paris, 2024).

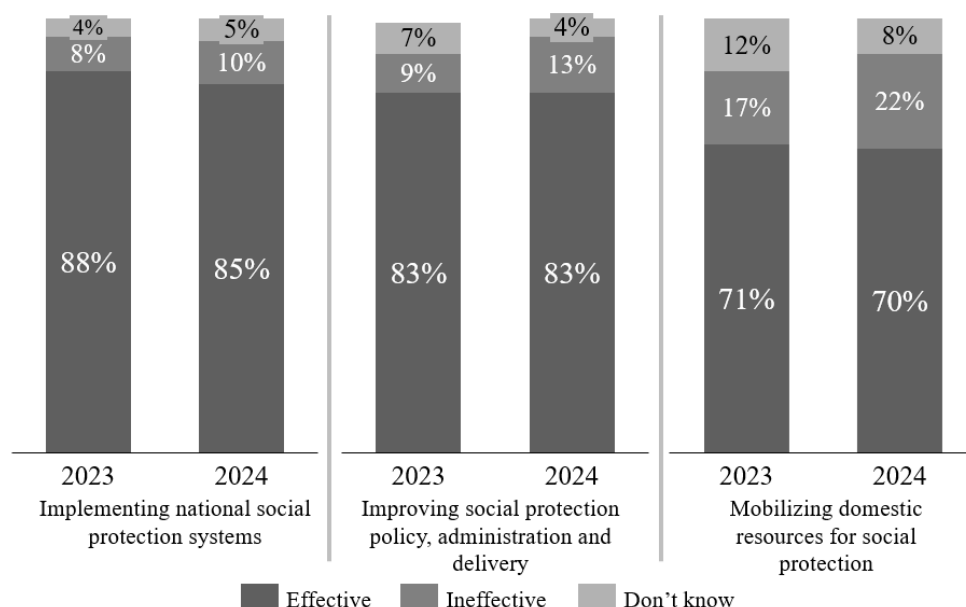
⁹ Nobuyuki Tanaka and others, *Education Finance Watch 2024* (World Bank Group, Washington, D.C.; UNESCO, Paris, 2024).

¹⁰ United Nations, Inter-agency Task Force on Financing for Development, *Financing for Sustainable Development Report 2024: Financing for Development at a Crossroads* (New York, 2024), p. 9.

¹¹ United Nations 2024, https://sdgs.un.org/goals/goal1#progress_and_info.

¹² International Labour Office, *World Social Protection Report 2024–2026: Universal Social Protection for Climate Action and a Just Transition* (Geneva, 2024).

Figure 6
Areas in which Governments rated United Nations country team support as effective

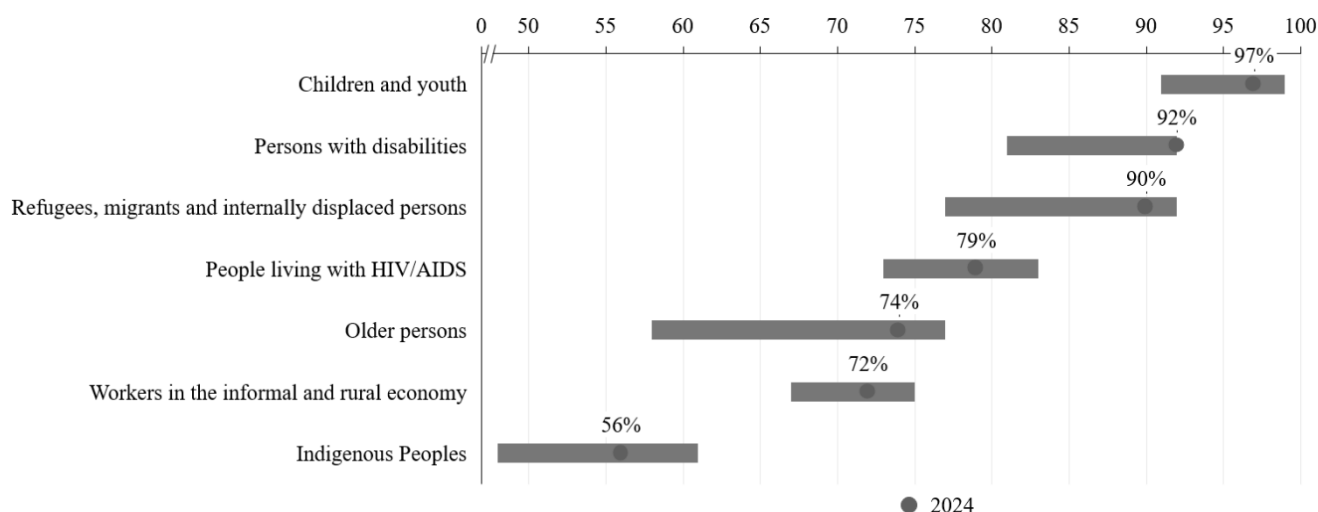


Source: Department of Economic and Social Affairs survey of Governments, 2023 and 2024.

64. System-wide support focuses on comprehensive, sustainable and inclusive social protection systems that are aligned with the International Labour Organization (ILO) standards. For example, United Nations country teams supported the development of national social protection or national care policies in Brazil, Kenya, Sri Lanka and Zambia, among others. In Malaysia, the United Nations supported the extension of social protection to all workers, regardless of nationality, covering workplace injury, unemployment, disability and death.

65. We have a good foundation on which to build. Seventy per cent of host Governments considered United Nations country teams to be effective in mobilizing domestic resources for social protection. More than 90 per cent of host Governments rated United Nations assistance as effective for groups, including children, youth, persons with disabilities, refugees, migrants and internally displaced persons (see figure 7).

Figure 7

Government ratings of the effectiveness of United Nations country team support for expanding targeted social protection policies and programmes, by population group

Source: Department of Economic and Social Affairs survey of Governments, various years.

Note: The range corresponds to the minimum and maximum values during the period 2021–2024.

66. The effectiveness of United Nations support for social protection for older persons has increased in the past year, although rates lagged in other groups, including for informal and rural workers and Indigenous Peoples. In Brazil, ILO convened the first Global Dialogue on Just Transition with Indigenous Peoples in December 2024 to include their perspectives in government efforts to realize a just transition.

67. The Global Accelerator on Jobs and Social Protection for Just Transitions is bringing together stakeholders, including nine new pathfinder countries, in 2024.¹³ The first funding round, totalling €21 million, supported 24 country projects, with an additional \$22.8 million mobilized for the second funding round in 2025. The Accelerator has developed resources, including an informality dashboard and a macroeconomic diagnostics tool, which enable the enhanced design of projects and policies and social and economic impact assessments.

Global health

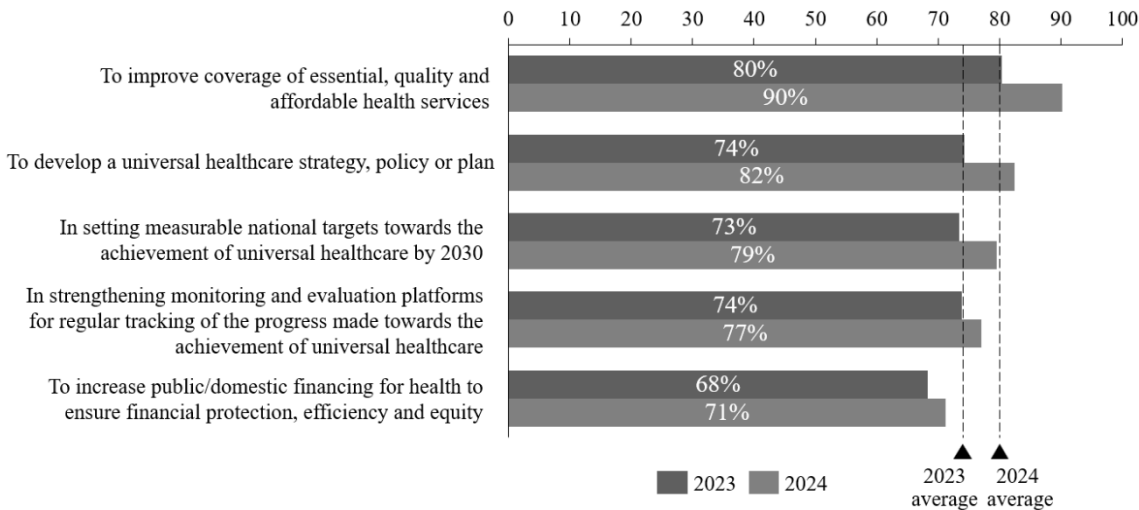
68. Universal health coverage is a critical element of social protection, contributing to a healthy workforce, greater productivity and reduced economic vulnerabilities. However, it remains an unmet global commitment.

69. The 2024 quadrennial comprehensive policy review underscores the need for development system support to promote partnerships for primary healthcare, work towards equitable access and embed analytical tools in national health policy to develop countermeasures to respond to health emergencies. More than half the world's population still lacks access to essential health services. High out-of-pocket costs continue to push millions into poverty. Despite legal provisions for social health protection covering 83.7 per cent of the global population, only 60.1 per cent are effectively protected.

¹³ The pathfinder countries include Albania, Cabo Verde, Cambodia, Colombia, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Guinea, Indonesia, Malawi, Namibia, Nepal, Pakistan, Paraguay, Philippines, Rwanda, Senegal, Uzbekistan and Viet Nam.

70. In 2024, 53 per cent of surveyed host country Governments indicated Sustainable Development Goal 3 as a top priority area for United Nations support over the next two years. Government feedback on United Nations support in strengthening health systems has been positive. It was especially high for universal health coverage strategies (82 per cent) and coverage of essential, quality and affordable health services (90 per cent), each of which increased by over 8 percentage points from 2023 (see figure 8).

Figure 8
Government ratings of the effectiveness of United Nations country team support for healthcare, by type of assistance



Source: Department of Economic and Social Affairs survey of Governments, 2023 and 2024.

71. Developing countries remain deeply exposed to stark global inequities in access to life-saving interventions, including vaccines, diagnostics and medical countermeasures for public health emergencies. Highlighting the need for stronger preparedness, in 2024 the Pandemic Fund allocated \$885 million to enhance pandemic prevention and response capacities in vulnerable countries.

72. Access to safe water, sanitation and hygiene remains a fundamental determinant of public health. The United Nations has been working in over 100 countries to expand climate-resilient services, supporting millions in accessing safe water and sanitation.

73. Shortfalls in health financing remain a pressing concern. Host country Governments indicate that it is an area where the United Nations development system could step up its support. Many countries, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa, spend more on debt servicing than on health, limiting their ability to provide essential services. Several countries have managed to obtain debt for development swaps that convert debt repayments into health services investments through the Debt2Health programme. Such initiatives could be scaled up with United Nations country team support in facilitating country partnerships with international financial institutions to boost support for health systems. The upcoming Fourth International Conference on Financing for Development offers a pivotal moment to find solutions that alleviate debt burdens and mobilize resources for primary healthcare.

Demographic shifts

74. The quadrennial comprehensive policy review requested the United Nations development system to support Member States in responding to demographic trends.

Accordingly, the United Nations development system is enhancing data and policy frameworks. The Department of Economic and Social Affairs has published a manual on National Inclusion Accounts to improve age-disaggregated economic data. The regional commissions provide tailored policy and capacity-building support to countries. The Demographic Resilience Programme of the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) helps countries to develop rights-based responses to demographic shifts, including those related to labour markets, social protection and human capital development.

75. It is essential that United Nations country teams integrate demographic analysis into common country analyses and Cooperation Frameworks, recognizing the profound impact of demographic trends on sustainable development.

6. Climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution

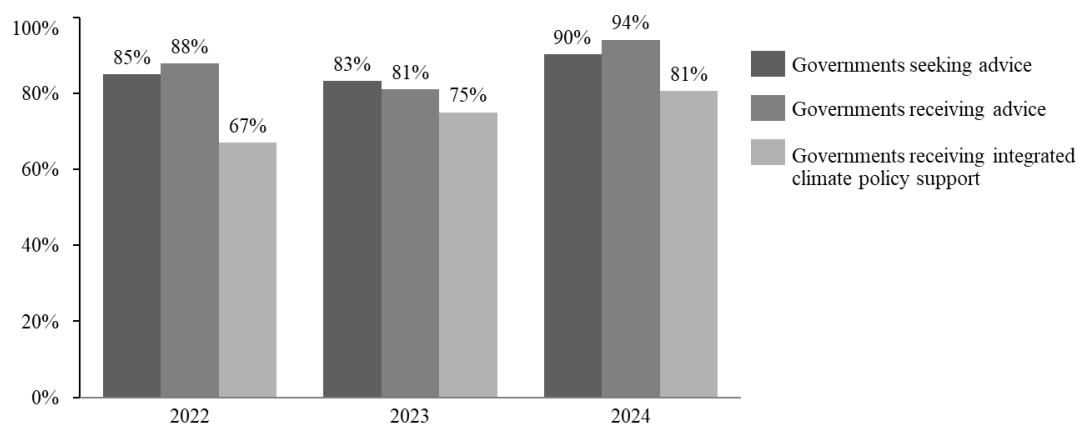
76. A transformative green and blue economy resilient pathway to accelerate progress towards the 2030 Agenda is rooted in low-carbon, biodiversity-friendly and pollution-free actions. These actions seek to slow climate change, halt biodiversity loss and reduce pollution. Effectively tackling the triple planetary crisis of climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution requires a profound transformation in existing socioeconomic systems. Climate adaptation and resilience require urgent scaled-up action to prevent losses and protect lives and livelihoods.

77. The decade that has passed since the Sustainable Development Goals were agreed upon has been the warmest ever recorded. Current projections suggest a temperature rise of 2.6°C to 3.1°C by the end of this century, exceeding the 1.5°C limit stipulated in the Paris Agreement and reaffirmed in the Pact for the Future. Despite global efforts and an accelerating transition to renewable energy, the response to climate change and biodiversity loss remains insufficient to secure a liveable planet.

78. The United Nations development system is supporting countries in planning and implementing more ambitious nationally determined contributions, which serve as opportunities to integrate economy-wide commitments into broader climate and development efforts, and supporting efforts to reach \$1.3 trillion in climate finance for developing countries, as agreed upon at the twenty-ninth session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change.

79. The 2024 host country Government survey confirmed that United Nations support for climate action policies is increasingly effective and includes more integrated delivery (see figure 9).

Figure 9
Governments rate support on climate action policies as increasingly effective



Source: Department of Economic and Social Affairs survey of Governments, 2022–2024.

80. Examples of support for national climate action include United Nations Environment Programme assistance to over 30 countries to implement nationally determined contributions and to 64 nations to issue their first biennial transparency reports. Since UNDP launched the Climate Promise partnership in 2019, it has supported more than 125 developing countries in developing second-generation nationally determined contributions with increasingly ambitious targets. The United Nations development system is now coordinating support for an even more ambitious third generation of nationally determined contributions due in 2025.

81. In 2024, the United Nations development system supported communities in 50 countries in adapting to droughts and rising sea levels, benefiting 3.5 million people and restoring 241,000 hectares of land. In small island developing States such as Niue, Palau and Timor-Leste, the United Nations backed collaborative action on early warning systems, enhancing climate disaster preparedness in vulnerable regions.

82. At the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity in 2024, Parties to the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework emphasized the need to empower Indigenous Peoples and local communities in conservation efforts and highlighted the urgency of closing an annual biodiversity finance gap that exceeded \$700 billion. In response, the United Nations development system expanded its support for addressing biodiversity loss and pollution. This enabled the United Nations to support 108 countries in conserving and restoring ecosystems and empowering Indigenous Peoples, covering over 1.6 million hectares and benefiting nearly 900,000 people.

83. Challenges persist in mobilizing resources and strengthening monitoring frameworks, although efforts are underway to address these. In May 2024, the Kunming Biodiversity Fund, launched jointly with China, committed \$230 million to biodiversity projects in 15 countries. The United Nations development system in 2024 supported 35 developing countries in securing grant funding from the Global Environment Facility and assisted 60 countries with emissions tracking and environmental data systems as a basis for developing policies and steering progress.

84. Looking ahead, scaling up country-level technical assistance, expanding access to sustainable finance and enhancing integrated monitoring systems will be critical to accelerate action on climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution. The thirtieth session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention

on Climate Change, to be hosted by Brazil in 2025, presents a pivotal opportunity to address these three interconnected priorities.

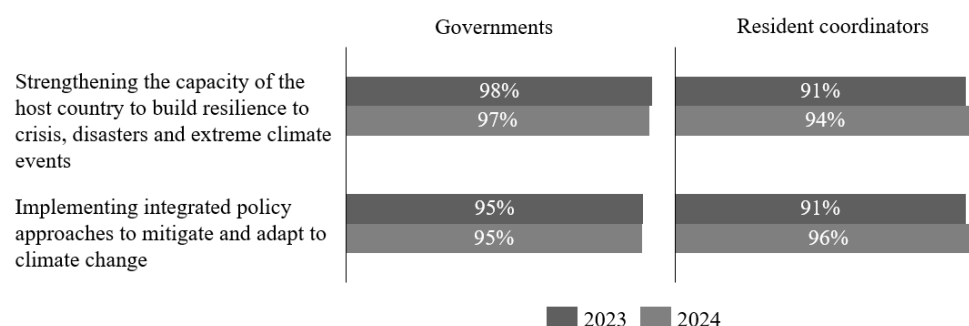
Managing climate and environmental risks

85. The 2024 quadrennial comprehensive policy review underlines the continued need for the United Nations development system to support Governments and emphasizes key areas to expand, including in disaster risk governance and resilience. The system supports countries in closing persistent gaps in disaster data, financing and systemic risk analysis that can jeopardize the climate, biodiversity and pollution transformation path.

86. In 2024, at least 95 per cent of host country Governments indicated that United Nations country teams were effective in strengthening their capacity to build resilience against crises, disasters and extreme climate events and implementing integrated policy approaches to mitigate and adapt to climate change. The results of the resident coordinator survey confirm these findings (see figure 10).

Figure 10

Government and resident coordinator ratings of the effectiveness of United Nations country teams in building climate and environmental resilience



Source: Department of Economic and Social Affairs survey of Governments; Department of Economic and Social Affairs survey of resident coordinators, 2023 and 2024.

87. The United Nations development system supported disaster risk reduction efforts by reinforcing national and local resilience, demonstrating tangible progress towards risk-informed development. A joint initiative, Early Warnings for All, strengthened national ownership of multi-hazard early warning systems by providing tailored resources to improve warning systems in 26 least developed countries and small island developing States in 2024. The United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction provided technical support to integrate disaster risk reduction and environment management into national policies in 11 least developed countries and 22 small island developing States. Local action has advanced through initiatives such as the Making Cities Resilient 2030 programme. Over 1,750 cities in 91 countries are participating, with targeted support helping 576 cities to implement disaster risk reduction and climate actions.

IV. Scaling up our ambition, convening and support as countries accelerate action for sustainable development

A. Convening to help countries to mobilize means of implementation

88. Strengthening the means of implementation – particularly in finance, trade, capacity-building, and science, technology and innovation – remains central to the work of the United Nations development system. Resident coordinators play a pivotal role in convening stakeholders, with 90 per cent of host Governments recognizing their contributions. In 2024, collaboration among United Nations country teams improved, with 64 per cent reporting a shared approach to partnerships (up from 55 per cent in 2023) and 74 per cent considering resident coordinators as being effective in partnership and resource mobilization efforts. These partnerships span a wide range of actors – from bilateral donors and international financial institutions to civil society – demonstrated by 92 per cent of resident coordinators promoting meaningful civil society participation in planning and programming.

89. Efforts to engage the private sector have also strengthened, with 79 per cent of host Governments confirming meaningful engagement, particularly in digital transformation. Initiatives such as the AI Hub for Sustainable Development, launched in 2024, are helping to catalyse local artificial intelligence ecosystems in partnership with the private sector. Meanwhile, South-South and triangular cooperation continue to complement traditional development aid, with 66 per cent of resident coordinators incorporating such approaches into their frameworks. The solution lab of the United Nations Office for South-South Cooperation and nearly \$20 million in contributions to the Office's trust funds reflect growing, diverse support for scalable, innovative solutions across countries at all development levels.

B. Strengthening frameworks, institutions and capacities

90. The 2030 Agenda underscores the importance of strong national policy, legal and regulatory frameworks for driving sustainable development. The 2024 quadrennial comprehensive policy review called upon the United Nations development system to enhance its support for national and subnational institutions and capacities. Survey results from 2024 reflect strong recognition of this work: 93 per cent of host Governments positively rated United Nations support in advancing policy and regulatory reforms, up from 86 per cent in 2023. Satisfaction was consistently high across country groups, with 100 per cent of African countries and landlocked developing countries affirming the value of this support, along with strong ratings from the least developed countries, middle-income countries and countries facing humanitarian emergencies.

91. Resident coordinators are increasingly seen as effective leaders in this area, with 88 per cent of United Nations country teams affirming their leadership in supporting policy change. However, the proportion of resident coordinators who felt that their country teams were contributing effectively to this work declined slightly, from 93 per cent in 2023 to 86 per cent in 2024. In line with the quadrennial comprehensive policy review, the United Nations development system is emphasizing locally led approaches, using thematic portfolio models to support governance and development solutions tailored to national contexts. For example, in Indonesia, this approach has enhanced local planning and budgeting, while in the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, it has supported community resilience and integrated humanitarian planning. This work will remain a priority throughout the current quadrennial cycle.

C. Financing national opportunities through innovative partnerships

Seizing national opportunities for public and private investments at scale

92. The 2024 quadrennial comprehensive policy review underscored the critical role of the United Nations in mobilizing diverse funding sources and building partnerships, with a focus on enhancing digital capacity and readiness. Since the adoption in 2015 of the Addis Ababa Action Agenda of the Third International Conference on Financing for Development, significant progress has been made, with 86 countries implementing integrated national financing frameworks. In 2024, 79 per cent of host Governments acknowledged the adequacy of United Nations support in this area, reflecting the vital contribution of the United Nations to financing the Sustainable Development Goals. By 2024, the most advanced reforms in 17 countries had generated \$16 billion in new finance and applied \$32 billion in existing finance to make greater impacts on progress towards the Goals.

93. Entities such as UNDP have demonstrated accelerated progress in financing, with the Sustainable Finance Hub helping 30 countries to mobilize \$28 billion through thematic bonds. Over 50 countries have also received support in digital and artificial intelligence assessments, attracting investments for digital infrastructure. In addition, the “Financing for Small Island Developing States” initiative of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs has helped small island nations to align financing with their priorities, showcasing the tailored support of the United Nations for diverse national contexts.

94. Looking ahead, the Fourth International Conference on Financing for Development, to be held in 2025, presents a pivotal opportunity to reform the global financial system and mobilize the stimulus needed to support developing countries’ sustainable development, including by fostering private investment, mobilizing low-cost capital and reforming the international financial architecture to ensure that developing countries are fully represented in decision-making. As the United Nations enters the next quadrennial cycle, it is well positioned to intensify its efforts to help countries meet their commitments to the Goals.

D. Science, technology and innovation and the data dividend

95. The 2024 quadrennial comprehensive policy review emphasized the importance of United Nations support to the strengthening of cooperation in science, technology and innovation, including through promoting an open, fair, inclusive and non-discriminatory environment. It also reiterated the need to enhance country support and research capacities, including expertise in data. Currently, 68 per cent of United Nations entities integrate digital methodologies into their programming and over 90 per cent of host countries recognize the system’s contribution to building national data capacities. For example, the Technology Bank for the Least Developed Countries has completed 13 technology needs assessments, with 3 more in progress, and its strategic plan for the period 2025–2027 aims to deliver policy advice, technical assistance and capacity-building across 44 countries.

96. Despite these advancements, there are ongoing challenges in meeting the increasing demand for data expertise. A 2024 survey showed that while 82 per cent of host Governments reported strengthened cooperation in science, technology and innovation (6 per cent higher than in 2023), there were significant gaps in data-driven decision-making. Among the top 10 areas ranked as most strategic, such as data visualization and advanced analytics, between 55 and 75 per cent of country teams reported insufficient capacity. In addition, 67 per cent identified unmet needs in data-driven policymaking. As United Nations country teams continue to address these

gaps, initiatives such as the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development Data work to bolster national data ecosystems, improving evidence for decision-making and facilitating new investments to bridge data gaps in tracking the Goals.

E. Supporting economic growth through trade

97. The 2024 quadrennial comprehensive policy review emphasized the importance of a strong economic environment, including trade, tax, monetary and financial systems, in supporting national development. In response, the United Nations development system offers tailored support to enhance trade facilitation, digital trade practices and sustainable economic growth.

98. For least developed countries preparing for graduation, the United Nations system monitors and updates international trade support measures. The Department of Economic and Social Affairs, the International Trade Centre and the World Trade Organization manage the ePing platform to track sanitary and phytosanitary measures and technical trade barriers. In addition, in 2025, the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development will release guidance to help countries to navigate tax and investment treaty issues.

99. In the Arab region, the United Nations Industrial Development Organization introduced the Arab Food Safety Initiative for Trade Facilitation to harmonize agricultural standards and boost intraregional trade. In Africa, the United Nations supports the African Continental Free Trade Area, helping 42 countries to integrate trade commitments into national strategies, focusing on sustainability, gender inclusivity, and small and medium-sized enterprises. The United Nations also assists 19 African countries in developing green value chains aligned with climate goals.

100. At the regional level, the United Nations Centre for Trade Facilitation and Electronic Business promotes digital solutions such as digital product passports, enhancing transparency and supporting the circular economy. In Asia and the Pacific, the United Nations helped Cambodia to diversify export markets, while over 1,700 stakeholders from countries in special situations benefited from trade policy training.

101. Through these efforts, the United Nations development system enables countries to improve trade and economic policies and create sustainable and inclusive development strategies for national progress.

V. Tailoring support for every country context

102. Recognizing that there is no “one size fits all” approach to development,¹⁴ the United Nations development system repositioning process is aimed at tailoring the United Nations country team presence, skill sets and response to each country. This was at the heart of the idea of establishing a core resident coordinator office function in each country setting, while allowing other substantive capacities and the wider United Nations country team response to fluctuate and adapt to national needs and priorities, as defined in the Cooperation Frameworks, allowing for a much more tailored approach to different country challenges and demands.

103. The 2024 quadrennial comprehensive policy review reiterated the call for the United Nations development system to address the challenges faced by countries in special situations, including least developed countries, landlocked developing countries, small island developing States and African countries, and to support their efforts to achieve the internationally agreed development goals. The review also

¹⁴ General Assembly resolution [79/226](#), para. 2.

called for supporting countries in complex situations, including those in conflict situations and emergencies, and for assistance on the specific challenges facing middle-income countries.

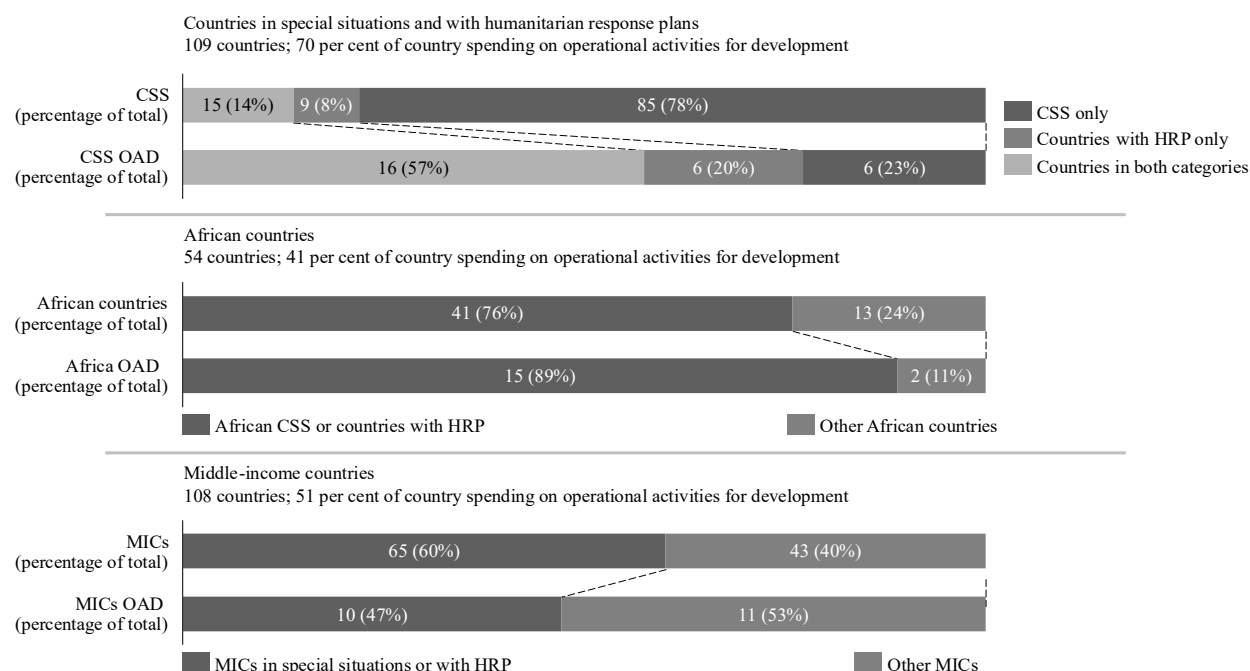
104. Moving forward, we will continue to tailor our development approaches by deepening context-specific strategies, providing targeted support and policy expertise to support vulnerable countries with addressing complex situations, and reinforcing the Cooperation Framework to accelerate progress towards the 2030 Agenda.

A. Meeting our promise to provide tailored support in different country settings

105. Two thirds of countries supported by the United Nations development system are in special situations or facing humanitarian emergencies. Together, they account for 109 of 162 countries currently supported by United Nations country teams and 70 per cent of all country-level spending (see figure 11).

106. The 100 countries in special situations have specific programmes of action, including least developed countries (44), landlocked developing countries (32) and small island developing States (52), with some countries falling into more than one of those categories.¹⁵ The United Nations development system also supports 24 countries facing complex emergencies. Of these, 15 are also countries in special situations. All 54 African States are host countries; 39 are in special situations.

Figure 11
Countries in special situations and other groups



Source: CEB, 2025.

Abbreviations: CSS, countries in special situations; HRP, humanitarian response plan; MICs, middle-income countries; OAD, operational activities for development (billions of United States dollars).

¹⁵ In total, 100 countries are members of at least one of the categories. Some countries are members of multiple categories, for example, those that are both landlocked developing countries and least developed countries.

1. Tailored support to least developed countries, landlocked developing countries, small island developing States and African countries

107. In 2024, the United Nations development system continued to provide tailored support to the least developed countries, landlocked developing countries and small island developing States. These countries face unique development challenges and follow distinct programmes of action. Although they are home to 1.3 billion people – 16 per cent of the global population – they account for only 3 per cent of global gross domestic product (GDP).

108. These countries received 56 per cent of the total country-level expenditures of the United Nations, with spending increasing faster than average. Compared with 2020, support grew by 20 per cent for the least developed countries and by over 32 per cent for landlocked developing countries and small island developing States, compared with a 19 per cent rise across all countries. Notably, in small island developing States, development spending made up two thirds of total United Nations spending (see table), surpassing humanitarian aid.

Expenditures on operational activities by country group

<i>Country group</i>	<i>Number of countries</i>	<i>Total 2023 expenditure (billions of United States dollars)</i>	<i>Expenditure as a share of the total at the country level (percentage)</i>	<i>Three-year trend in expenditure (percentage) in real terms</i>	<i>2023 development share of total (percentage)</i>
Least developed countries	44	20.4	50.3	+20	30
Small island developing States	52	1.3	3.3	+32	67
Landlocked developing countries	32	11.5	28.4	+34	30
African countries	54	16.6	40.8	+14	33
Middle-income countries	108	20.8	51.2	+18	41
Countries facing complex emergencies	24	21.8	53.7	n/a	24
All programme country Governments	162	39.6	90	+19	34

Source: CEB, 2025.

Abbreviation: n/a, not applicable.

109. Several major global processes in 2024 reaffirmed the commitment to countries in special situations. At the fourth International Conference on Small Island Developing States, the need for targeted, results-oriented investments was emphasized. The General Assembly adopted the new Programme of Action for Landlocked Developing Countries for the Decade 2024–2034, building on lessons from the Vienna Programme of Action. This new road map will guide preparations for the Third United Nations Conference on Landlocked Developing Countries, to be held in 2025, with the aim of helping these countries to overcome geographic disadvantages. Meanwhile, Member States stressed the continued importance of implementing the Doha Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries. To support least developed countries graduating from this classification, the United Nations launched the Sustainable Graduation Support Facility in four countries.

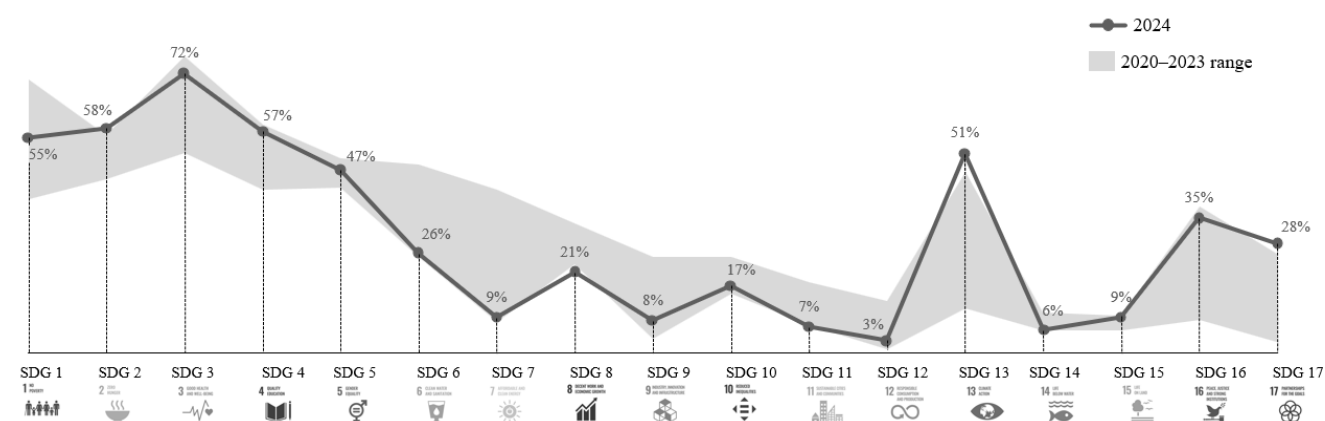
110. Most United Nations entities have developed strategies to support these groups: 80 per cent for the least developed countries, 70 per cent for landlocked developing countries (up from 61 per cent in 2023), 80 per cent for small island developing States (up from 74 per cent) and 75 per cent for African countries. However, reporting to governing bodies is not yet consistent across the system, highlighting the need for more coordinated system-wide reporting.

111. Countries in special situations prioritize means of implementation and focus on key Sustainable Development Goals. In 2024, all such countries emphasized contributions to food security and hunger, health and well-being, education, poverty eradication, climate action and gender equality. There were also regional differences. For example, least developed countries emphasized support for water and sanitation (Goal 6) and responsible consumption (Goal 12). Small island developing States highlighted contributions to land, ecosystems and forests (Goal 15).

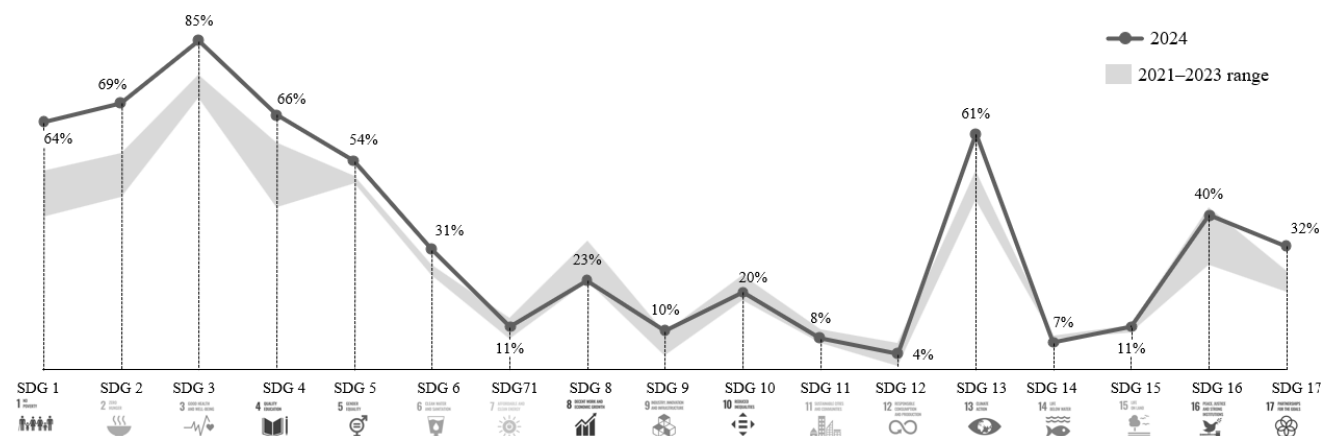
Figure 12

Government responses on selection of the top five areas of significant United Nations contributions to the Sustainable Development Goals in their country over the past two years

(All programme countries, top five Goal areas with significant United Nations contributions (past two years))



(Countries in special situations, top five Goal areas with significant United Nations contributions (past two years))



Source: Department of Economic and Social Affairs survey of programme country Governments (various years).

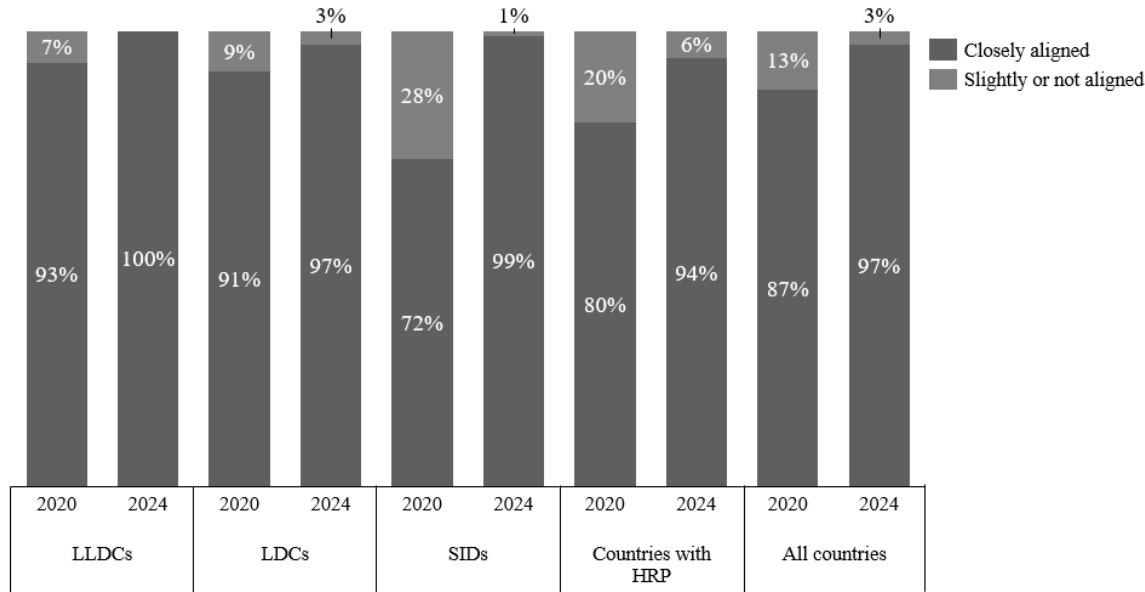
Abbreviation: SDG, Sustainable Development Goal.

112. Satisfaction with United Nations support remains high. In 2024, 98 per cent of countries in special situations felt that United Nations activities were well aligned with their national priorities, up from 85 per cent in 2020. Among African countries, this alignment reached 100 per cent. Countries also reported strong satisfaction with how United Nations country teams are configured, with ratings between 89 per cent and 92 per cent. Satisfaction among small island developing States saw the greatest improvement, from 57 per cent in 2019 to 83 per cent in 2024. Satisfaction among landlocked developing countries declined slightly, from 92 per cent to 89 per cent,

while humanitarian settings saw a drop from 100 per cent in 2023 to 84 per cent in 2024.

Figure 13

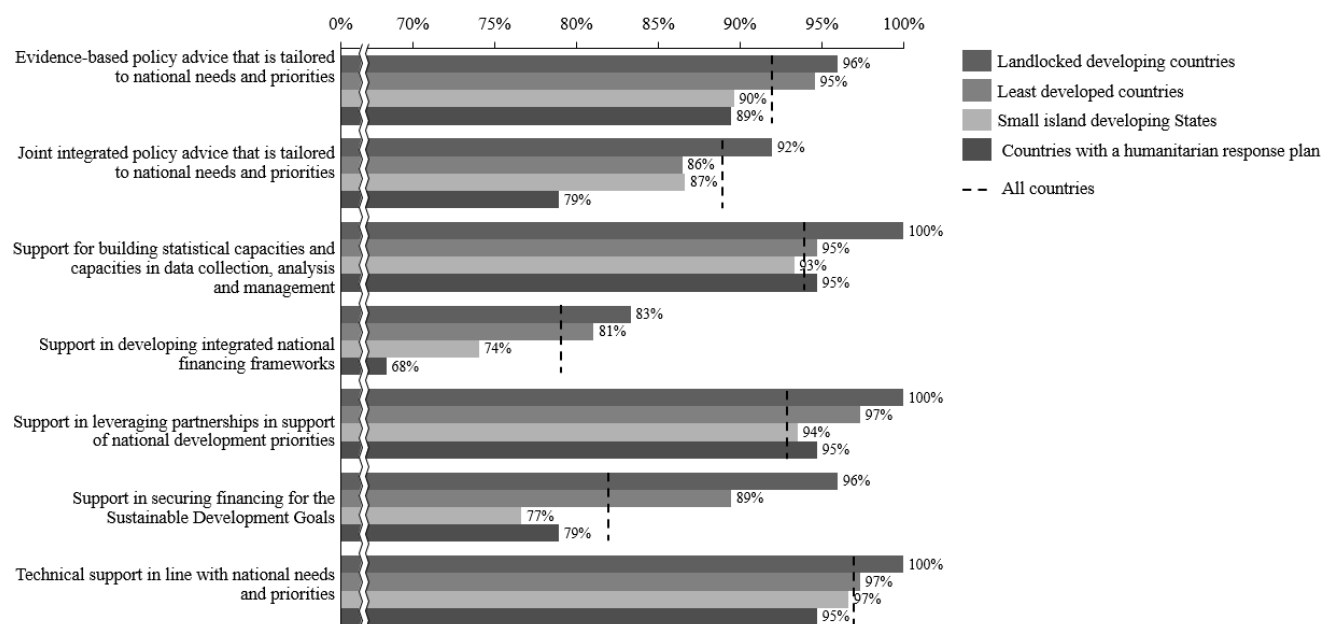
Alignment of activities with national development needs and priorities



Source: Department of Economic and Social Affairs survey of programme country Governments (various years).
Abbreviations: HRP, humanitarian response plan; LDCs, least developed countries; LLDCs, landlocked developing countries; SIDS, small island developing States.

113. United Nations support for evidence-based policy advice, technical assistance, statistical capacity and partnerships also received high ratings. However, countries expressed slightly lower satisfaction in areas such as joint policy advice and resource mobilization, particularly when it came to integrated national financing frameworks. This lower rating underscores the need for the United Nations development system to strengthen support in this area, especially as satisfaction with financing assistance has generally improved in recent years (see figure 14).

Figure 14

Extent to which groups of countries agreed that the United Nations adequately provides advice and support (by category)

Source: 2024 Department of Economic and Social Affairs survey of host country Governments.

114. In response to advocacy led by small island developing States, the High-level Panel on the Development of a Multidimensional Vulnerability Index for Small Island Developing States released its final report in February 2024. The report presented a new index, a conceptual framework and preliminary country scores aimed at capturing structural vulnerabilities that traditional economic measures, such as GDP, fail to reflect.

115. The 2024 quadrennial comprehensive policy review encouraged United Nations entities to use the multidimensional vulnerability index and accompanying vulnerability-resilience profiles in relevant programmes and reporting. Over the coming years, the United Nations development system will work to integrate these tools to support more targeted, evidence-based policies that address multidimensional vulnerabilities in countries most at risk.

2. Tailored support to middle-income countries

116. In 2024, the 108 middle-income countries accounted for 30 per cent of global GDP and 75 per cent of the world's population, including over 60 per cent of those living in poverty. This group is diverse: 53 per cent of middle-income countries supported by the United Nations development system are also in special situations, 10 middle-income countries are grappling with complex emergencies and 40 per cent of middle-income countries fall outside of any specific classification, yet they represent 27 per cent of country-level United Nations spending.

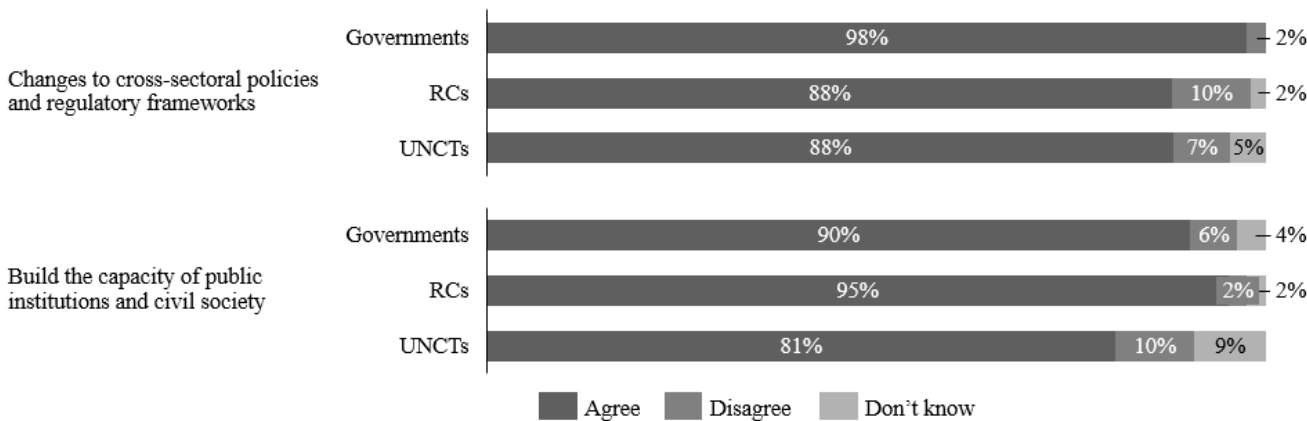
117. Despite this diversity, tailored United Nations support is increasing. Sixteen out of 29 United Nations entities reported having specific country strategies for middle-income countries in 2024. These strategies focus on integrated policy advice, technical assistance, financing for the Sustainable Development Goals, partnerships, innovation and South-South cooperation. To better align support with national priorities, 18 out of 26 entities now use gross national income per capita alongside

other indicators, such as the human development index (18), the multidimensional poverty index (17), Sustainable Development Goal indicators (22) and gender-related indicators (19).

118. Middle-income countries surveyed reported strong alignment between United Nations development system support and national priorities, rising from 85 per cent in 2020 to 100 per cent in 2024. Integrated, evidence-based policy advice rose in approval from 88 per cent in 2019 to 95 per cent in 2024, with similarly high ratings for support in statistics, partnerships and technical assistance.

119. Support for integrated national financing frameworks also improved, reaching 81 per cent in 2024, reflecting United Nations efforts to help countries to access climate and concessional financing and pursue debt relief. The process to go beyond GDP is also recognition that the GDP-centred approaches to sustainable development fail to properly capture the complexity, diversity and aspirations of middle-income countries. The 2024 quadrennial comprehensive policy review requested the United Nations development system to support the work under way to develop measures of progress that complement or go beyond GDP. Moving beyond GDP can shape more effective, evidence-based policies across economic, social and environmental priorities.

Figure 15
Perspectives of middle-income countries, resident coordinators and United Nations country team members on United Nations support in advancing the Sustainable Development Goals



Source: Department of Economic and Social Affairs survey of host country Governments, resident coordinators and United Nations country teams (various years).

Abbreviations: RCs, resident coordinators; UNCTs, United Nations country teams.

3. Implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals in complex settings: enhanced collaboration between humanitarian and development action and stronger linkages to peace

120. 2024 brought the interconnections of crises, shocks and development shortfalls to the forefront of the global consciousness. For the twelfth consecutive year, forced displacement due to violence and conflict increased, affecting over 120 million people.¹⁶ Around 90 million were in countries with high to extremely high risks of climate hazards, compounding their vulnerabilities.¹⁷

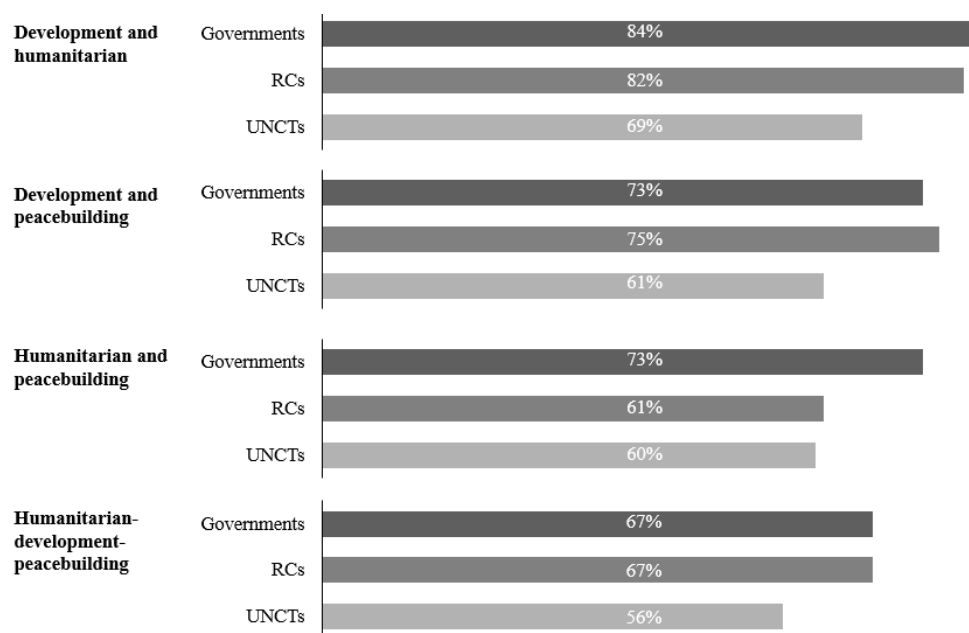
¹⁶ Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), “Global trends: forced displacement in 2023”, 2024.

¹⁷ UNHCR, “No escape: on the frontlines of climate change, conflict and forced displacement”, 2024.

121. The United Nations development system increasingly emphasizes collaboration and coordination with regard to humanitarian assistance and peacebuilding efforts as being essential to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals at the national level, in line with the 2024 quadrennial comprehensive policy review. However, country teams continue to show closer collaboration between development and humanitarian action compared with both development and peacebuilding and humanitarian and peacebuilding activities (see figure 16).

Figure 16

Percentage of Governments, United Nations country team members and resident coordinators reporting close collaboration across humanitarian, development and peacebuilding activities



Source: Department of Economic and Social Affairs survey of host country Governments, resident coordinators and United Nations country teams (various years).

Abbreviations: RCs, resident coordinators; UNCTs, United Nations country teams.

122. For the first time, the 2024 quadrennial comprehensive policy review called upon the United Nations development system to assist countries in addressing the development needs of internally displaced persons. The mandate of the Special Adviser of the Secretary-General on Solutions to Internal Displacement, which concluded in 2024, has left the system well positioned to respond to this request. The mandate played a crucial role in supporting Governments and United Nations resident coordinators to address the multidimensional challenge of internal displacement, beyond the humanitarian sector alone. Among 15 countries piloting this broader approach, 12 have adopted national plans and 2 are devising subnational plans. The plans cover solutions for over 11 million internally displaced persons, underscoring the importance of government leadership in finding responses at scale. Further support at the national level has come through the additional dedicated support for resident coordinators from solutions advisers. Guidance on integrating solutions pathways into country-level responses has been developed, with a view to ensuring that the United Nations ensures that its work strengthens the capacities of national Governments. A solutions hub, carrying forward the legacy of the Special Adviser, has been established in the Development Coordination Office with funding from UNDP, the International Organization for Migration and the Office of the United

Nations High Commissioner for Refugees to ensure that the guidance, lessons learned and approaches are carried forward in future country responses.

123. At the headquarters level, United Nations entities reported some obstacles to closer coordination with humanitarian activities and to strengthening linkages to peace. These obstacles related in particular to finance (89 per cent) and impact assessments (67 per cent), which remain largely siloed. Other concerns included a lack of common understanding of complementarity, inconsistent data and diverse planning tools. Some of these matters can be addressed through enhanced internal practices and procedures, including through coordinated analysis and complementary planning across mandates. Ultimately, more significant progress will rely on shifting behaviours across pillars, with better funding and entity-specific incentives.

B. Leaving no one behind

124. In alignment with the 2024 quadrennial comprehensive policy review, which called upon all development system entities to assist Governments with their efforts to respect and fulfil human rights commitments, the United Nations continues to work with countries in their efforts to operationalize the pledge to leave no one behind. Seventy-six per cent of United Nations entities now report on how they integrate human rights into their work to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals. This system-wide commitment supports my call to action for human rights and I encourage all entities to continue responding to this call.

25. Human rights support is in high demand at the country level. In 2024, 71 per cent of resident coordinators reported that programme country Governments had requested assistance on human rights. Among those, over 89 per cent of Governments agreed that United Nations country teams were effective in engaging with national human rights institutions. The deployment of human rights advisers expanded to 42 United Nations country teams, with 12 additional deployments approved but delayed due to funding constraints. The surge initiative of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) remained a key mechanism, delivering human rights analysis and operational advice for 40 common country analyses and United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Frameworks, and completing its sixth project round with 18 initiatives. These initiatives focused on accelerating progress on issues such as universal health coverage, the right to food and environmental protection.

126. With support from OHCHR in 2024, many country teams helped national counterparts to integrate human rights principles into national economic policies. They also provided human rights-based budget analyses, addressing topics such as economic inequality, debt, taxation and the human rights impacts of International Monetary Fund loans: issues directly tied to financing the six transformative pathways for sustainable development.

127. As interest grows among Member States in the ethical use of emerging technologies, including artificial intelligence, the United Nations development system has advanced its normative work by promoting human rights-based approaches to technology. In May 2024, the system released the Guidance on Human Rights Due Diligence for Digital Technology Use, offering practical guidance for applying human rights safeguards in rapidly evolving digital contexts. Complementing this, the Office of the Envoy of the Secretary-General on Technology (now called the Office for Digital and Emerging Technologies) and UNDP launched the universal digital public infrastructure safeguards framework, providing comprehensive recommendations to mitigate risks and promote inclusion and individual safety in digital systems.

VI. Accountability and oversight for development

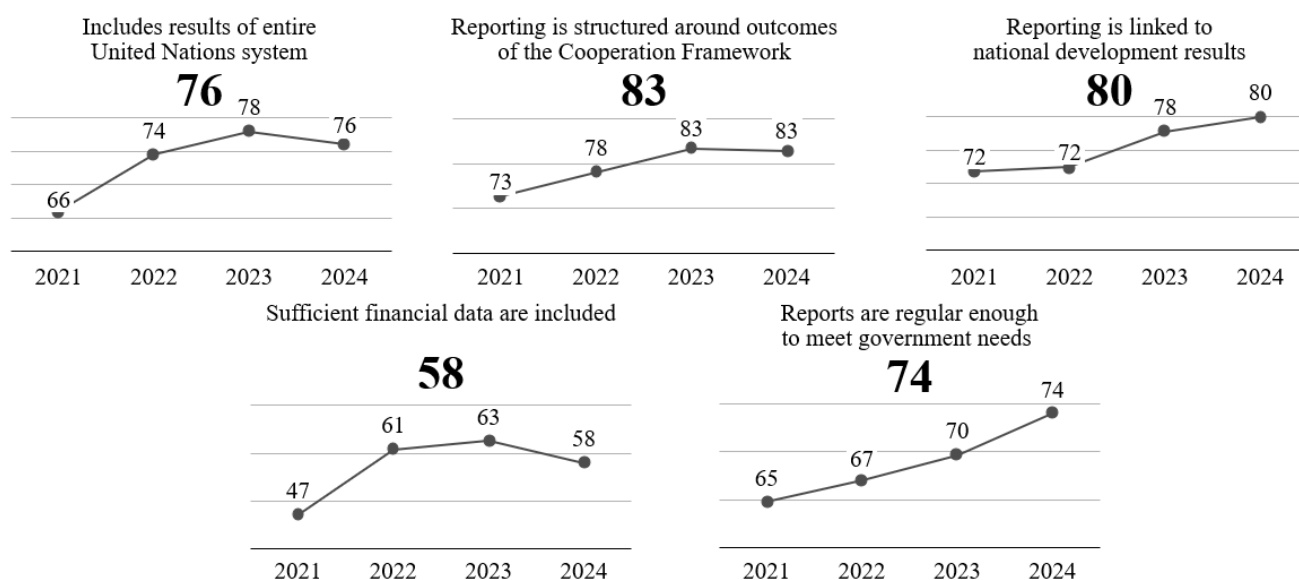
A. Results-based management and evidence-driven reporting

128. From day one of our reforms, I emphasized my absolute commitment to transparency and accountability. Over recent years, we have seen a major transformation in this regard. The 2024 quadrennial comprehensive policy review reinforced this by calling for strengthened results-based management for both individual entity efforts and integrated system-wide results. The reform established a structured framework for results reporting at the country, regional and global levels. In 2024, for the third consecutive year, all United Nations country teams produced annual country results reports, with most Governments acknowledging improved alignment with national priorities. However, only 58 per cent of Governments found financial data in these reports sufficient, pointing to an area that still requires attention.

Figure 17

Government agreement on the quality of United Nations country team annual results reports

(Percentage)



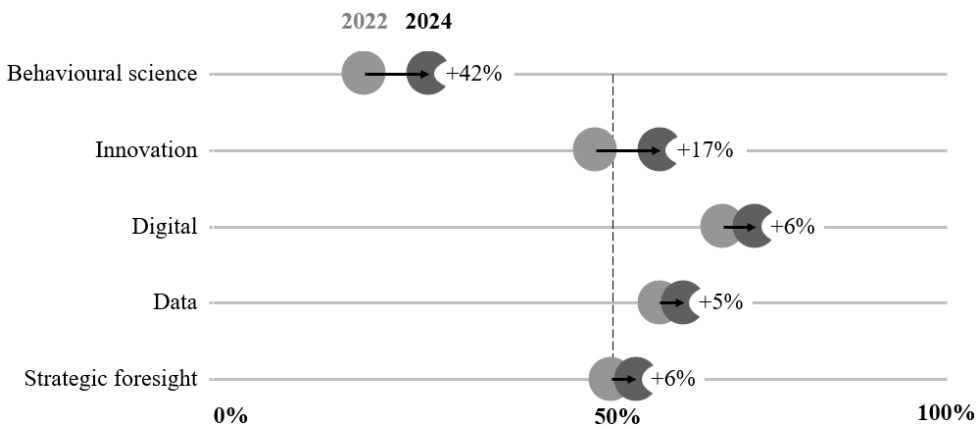
Source: Department of Economic and Social Affairs survey of Governments, 2024.

129. Progress has been made to sharpen accountability within internal structures. For example, 79 per cent of United Nations entities now require their country representatives to report contributions to Cooperation Framework results to the resident coordinator, although full coverage and a culture of collaboration are still needed. Resident coordinators have also been proactive in engaging national counterparts to enhance transparency and feedback. Upskilling efforts are under way to improve the capacity of United Nations teams in results-based management, including support from the Development Coordination Office and the integration of artificial intelligence platforms.

130. Financial transparency is also improving. All United Nations entities now report activity and spending by Sustainable Development Goal, with increasing alignment to global standards such as those of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development and the International Aid Transparency Initiative. A system-wide “data cube” initiative ensures comparability and consistency. The United Nations is also

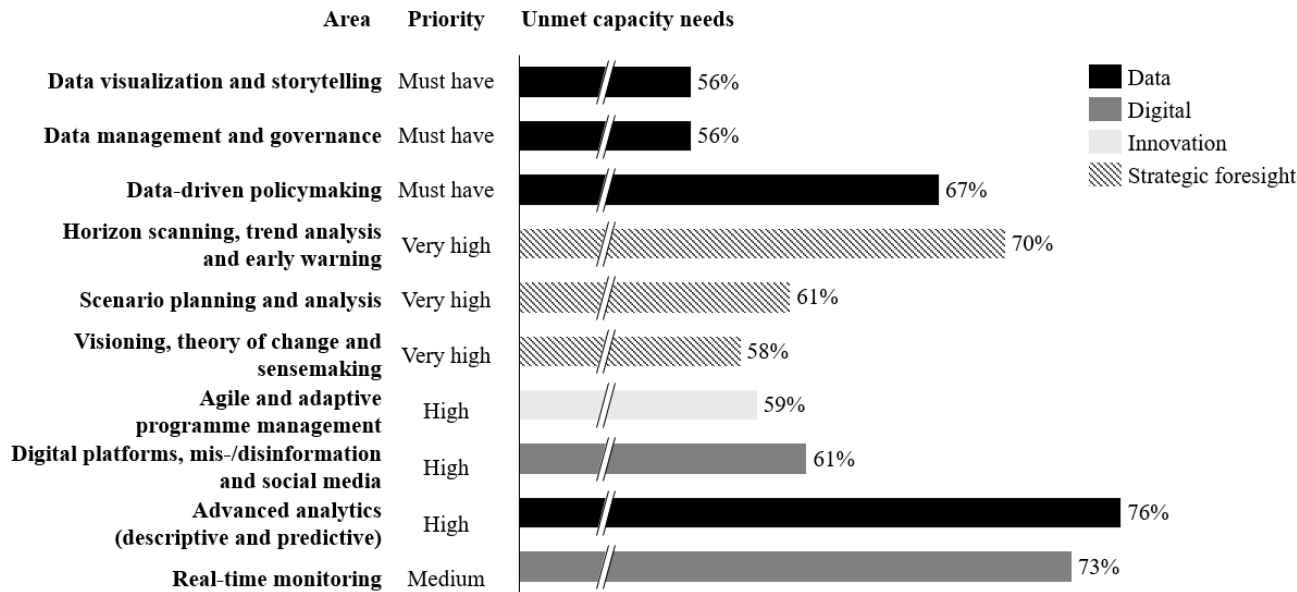
enhancing technical expertise in data, digital tools, innovation, foresight and behavioural science. While capabilities have grown, with around 60 per cent of entities using modern practices, country teams still report gaps in high-priority areas such as scenario planning and advanced analytics. Addressing these capacity needs will be crucial for achieving strategic impact in the years ahead.

Figure 18
Percentage of United Nations entities with key practice methods



Source: CEB scorecard assessment (2022 and 2024).

Figure 19
Unmet capacity Needs in United Nations country teams in the top 10 most strategic new priority areas



Source: information management system administered by the Development Coordination Office, 2024.

131. Reporting on Sustainable Development Goal contributions is becoming more standardized, with an increasing number of country teams using common indicators, with 52 per cent of country teams using common indicators in 2024, up from 15 per cent in 2022, and full adoption targeted by 2028. Ninety-two percent of Cooperation Frameworks now include joint workplans published on UN-Info, mapping activities to outcomes. To improve monitoring of the quadrennial comprehensive policy review,

the United Nations will launch an updated indicator framework in 2025, balancing accountability with streamlined reporting. This complements other systems such as the funding compact and the reform checklist.

B. System-wide Evaluation Office and learning of lessons for increased impact

132. In 2024, significant progress was made in solidifying the foundations of the United Nations Sustainable Development Group System-wide Evaluation Office, advancing its independence, credibility and effectiveness. As a unique function within the United Nations development system, the Office conducts evaluations and syntheses across the entire system, offering vital insights into the contributions of the United Nations to the 2030 Agenda. Its creation represents a major milestone in the repositioning of the United Nations development system. However, the Office remains in its early stages and faces ongoing challenges, particularly around the predictable and sustainable financial support necessary to fulfil its mandate.

133. A key achievement in 2024 was the adoption of the system-wide evaluation policy, which defines the roles, responsibilities and procedures for evaluations, including management responses and reporting. The Office worked throughout the year to build awareness of its mandate and promote transparency by publishing two major reports: the *Final Evaluation of the Spotlight Initiative (2017–2023)* and the *Value for Money Assessment of the Spotlight Initiative*. The evaluation offered eight actionable recommendations to improve United Nations interventions and harmonize practices aimed at ending violence against women and girls. These reports also accounted for the responsiveness of the United Nations system to evolving crises and contexts.

134. To bridge the gap between evaluation evidence and its use in policymaking, the Office launched an artificial intelligence-driven initiative to create interactive digital maps of evaluation evidence related to the Sustainable Development Goals and the quadrennial comprehensive policy review. It also produced evidence summaries on key themes of the quadrennial comprehensive policy review to support Member State deliberations. Two new system-wide evaluations were launched, one reviewing progress on forming a new generation of United Nations country teams and another assessing the United Nations Disability Inclusion Strategy, both scheduled for completion in 2025.

135. Looking ahead, the Office will issue a system-wide evaluation plan for the period 2025–2028 and develop mechanisms for quality assurance, management response, follow-up and oversight. Two additional evaluations will begin, focusing on Sustainable Development Goal transitions and youth-related United Nations programming. These efforts aim to strengthen both accountability and learning across the United Nations development system.

136. Despite the progress in establishing the Office, the limited voluntary contributions continue to undermine its ability to deliver in a dedicated, independent manner. Adequate, predictable and sustainable resourcing of the Office is fundamental to upholding its independence, credibility and effectiveness. Without predictable resources, the Office may be constrained by solely taking forward evaluations which are readily financed, since it does not have the capacity to engage in resource mobilization on a full-time basis.

137. The first annual report of the United Nations Sustainable Development Group System-wide Evaluation Office is being presented in parallel to the present report to the Economic and Social Council at its operational activities for development

segment, in accordance with the request of the General Assembly in the 2024 quadrennial comprehensive policy review.

C. A more responsive governance architecture

138. The accountability of the development system for system-wide results is grounded in a partnership between Member States and the Secretary-General. The annual operational activities for development segment of the Economic and Social Council acts as the accountability platform, guiding the development system to accelerate progress on the 2030 Agenda. Each entity's governing body should then ensure that the implementation of system-wide guidance is secured at the entity level.

139. Over the preceding quadrennial cycle, United Nations development system entities worked together, hand in hand, to enable Member States to perform their oversight functions. Entities have also strengthened governing body oversight functions, using tools such as the "checklist on the implementation of the reform of the United Nations development system". In 2024, 11 United Nations Sustainable Development Group entities reported using the checklist – up from 5 in 2023 – while a further 8 partially incorporated elements into their reporting. However, 12 entities have yet to report, underscoring the need for full participation by the entities, and oversight from the governing bodies, to drive coherent progress.

140. The oversight from Member States remains paramount in guiding the system to deliver a reformed United Nations system which is best equipped to deliver on the Sustainable Development Goals. We will work with Member States by continuing to strengthen the data-evidenced information at their disposal. Member States may consider further formalizing annual Economic and Social Council resolutions or decisions to respond to the report and provide necessary guidance. Monitoring and accountability tools related to implementation of the quadrennial comprehensive policy review will be updated in 2025 to reflect the latest guidance from the General Assembly, ensuring alignment and improved tracking of progress across the system.

D. Leading by example: translating commitments into action on the ground for sustainability, gender equality, disability inclusion and the prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse

141. The United Nations development system continues to strengthen its operational frameworks to ensure that system-wide practices are aligned with the standards and commitments enshrined in intergovernmental guidance. The 2024 quadrennial comprehensive policy review, in particular, includes specific directives to uphold standards across the system, including on gender equality, disability inclusion, protection from sexual exploitation and abuse, and sustainability. The reinvigorated resident coordinator system offers a unique vertical backbone that helps to ensure that this intergovernmental guidance results in concrete action on the ground, permeating across United Nations country teams in a way that adapts to national circumstances and demands. This was not the case in the looser coordination system that predated reforms.

Sustainability

142. The United Nations development system demonstrated strong progress in integrating a climate- and environment-responsive approach into its work in 2024, responding to demands by national counterparts. Most United Nations entities (93 per cent) now address environmental and climate challenges in strategic plans and report

on these activities to their governing bodies. More can be done to integrate environmental and social safeguards or standards across policies, projects and programmes. Currently, only 18 United Nations Sustainable Development Group entities (56 per cent) incorporate these standards, based on the latest data from 2023.

143. On the other hand, entities must strengthen efforts to meet commitments under the Strategy for Sustainability Management in the United Nations System, 2020–2030. Only 18 per cent have met environmental management systems requirements, although a further 45 per cent are approaching these thresholds. To scale up efforts, the Secretariat has developed a new reporting platform, dashboard and training packages for country teams. Scaling up environmental sustainability measures by fully implementing environmental management systems requirements and channelling investments in data collection, validation and reporting will contribute to building a more sustainable and climate-resilient United Nations.

Disability inclusion

144. Since 2019, the United Nations Disability Inclusion Strategy has provided a system-wide framework for transformative change. Significant progress has been made, with 40 per cent of United Nations entities and 45 per cent of United Nations country teams now meeting or exceeding at least half of the Strategy's accountability framework indicators. This progress results from the implementation of a series of internal policies to mainstream disability inclusion. Just over half of development system entities (51 per cent) have integrated disability inclusion into strategic plans, and 56 per cent of Cooperation Frameworks have disability inclusion mainstreamed in outcome areas and disaggregated data by disability.

145. Moving forward, increased attention will be required to address challenges in accessibility, procurement and human resources. Capacity-building initiatives and training for resident coordinators and country teams have been conducted by the Development Coordination Office and the Disability Inclusion Team in the Executive Office of the Secretary-General. Accessibility remains an obstacle, as 60 per cent of development system entities have yet to develop or implement accessibility policies. Where policies exist, they have enabled more comprehensive assessments, including safety measures. Employment of persons with disabilities in the United Nations remains low despite a 15 per cent increase since 2019, with 27 per cent of development system entities meeting or exceeding employment requirements. While country teams and development system entities continue to consult persons with disabilities, the consultations remain largely limited to disability-specific issues. Only 40 per cent of United Nations entities and 41 per cent of country teams consult persons with disabilities across all areas.

146. There is momentum. To build on the achievements of the past five years, the United Nations development system must ensure dedicated funding and a strengthened institutional commitment to embedding disability inclusion throughout all areas of our work. This is a key priority we have set for ourselves moving forward.

Prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse and sexual harassment

147. The 2024 quadrennial comprehensive policy review emphasized the need for stronger prevention and response efforts related to sexual exploitation and abuse and sexual harassment, in line with the zero-tolerance policy of the United Nations. While reported allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse decreased by 16 per cent from 2023 to 2024, the overall figures have risen significantly since 2018, reflecting increased awareness, improved training and strengthened reporting mechanisms. However, challenges such as underreporting, fear of retaliation and stigmatization remain.

148. Significant progress has been made to improve accountability and transparency. Over 97 per cent of United Nations entities now provide annual reporting to their governing bodies on actions taken to prevent and address these issues, a significant increase from 68 per cent in 2021. Most entities have specific policies and action plans in place, and 84 per cent of entities have sexual harassment action plans. In addition, the United Nations has made global efforts to support victims and prevent abuse, such as the establishment of victim support functions within organizations such as the World Health Organization, UN-Women and the United Nations Office for Project Services. A model prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse clause has also been developed for inclusion in Cooperation Frameworks to crystallize system-wide efforts, and briefings were provided to United Nations country teams on the clause's inclusion.

149. At the country level, resident coordinators hold system-wide responsibility for ensuring the development and implementation of annual action plans to mitigate risks of sexual exploitation and abuse with country teams, with 92 per cent of them having such plans in place. Gaps persist, however, particularly regarding whistleblower protection and reporting mechanisms. Only 36 per cent of country teams have established safeguards to protect those reporting abuse, and only 31 per cent have a funded position for a country-level coordinator. Addressing these gaps and ensuring sustainable funding and institutionalized prevention mechanisms remain essential to effectively combat sexual exploitation and abuse within the United Nations system.

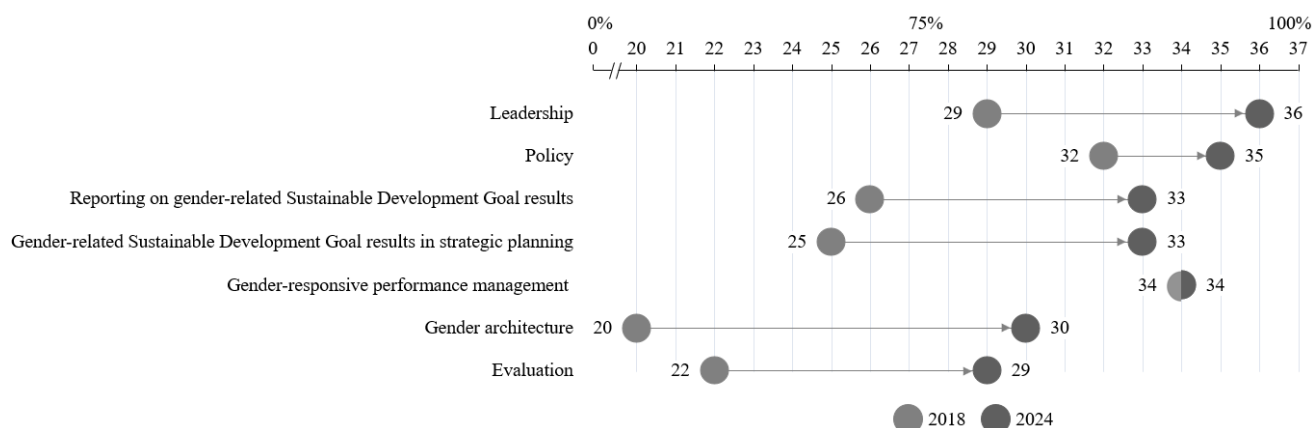
Gender equality

150. In 2024, the United Nations accelerated efforts to better integrate support for women and girls and advance gender equality through the United Nations System-wide Gender Equality Acceleration Plan. A new governance structure, led by the Secretary-General and comprising 43 United Nations entities, elevated accountability and political will. Seventy-five per cent of reporting entities established senior-level steering mechanisms to oversee gender equality policies. On International Women's Day in 2025, the Secretary-General launched the Gender Equality Clarion Call, reinforcing a unified, principled approach to gender equality across the system.

151. We are seeing the impact of these efforts more clearly within countries through stronger collaborative efforts. In Viet Nam, dedicated efforts are under way thanks to the Resident Coordinator Office, UNESCO, UNICEF, UNDP, UNFPA and UN-Women to close gender gaps in education, including through stronger policies and investment in infrastructure. Supported by the Joint Sustainable Development Goals Fund, a new programme in Türkiye, led by the Resident Coordinator and bringing five entities together, is working with public institutions and local authorities to improve policies for care services and support women's livelihoods.

152. The year also marked the conclusion of the second generation of the United Nations System-Wide Action Plan on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women, with 4 entities fully meeting all indicators and 28 meeting at least 75 per cent. However, a gap remains between commitments and capacity: while 89 per cent of development entities integrated gender into strategic planning, only 19 per cent reported having sufficient capacity to implement those commitments. To address this, the United Nations launched the third generation of the System-Wide Action Plan in 2024, introducing improved performance indicators to align gender equality with strategic plans and programming.

Figure 20

Number of United Nations development system entities that meet the below standards in the United Nations System-wide Action Plan on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women

Source: UN-Women, 2024.

Note: The target number for the evaluation category is 35 entities.

153. At the country level, United Nations country teams advanced implementation of gender-focused tools, including the United Nations country team System-wide Action Plan gender equality scorecard and the country team gender equality marker. Eleven country teams used the scorecard for the first time in 2024, and 19 entered a second cycle. Half of the 30 teams completing full assessments met at least 60 per cent of updated scorecard standards, an improvement from 30 per cent in 2023.

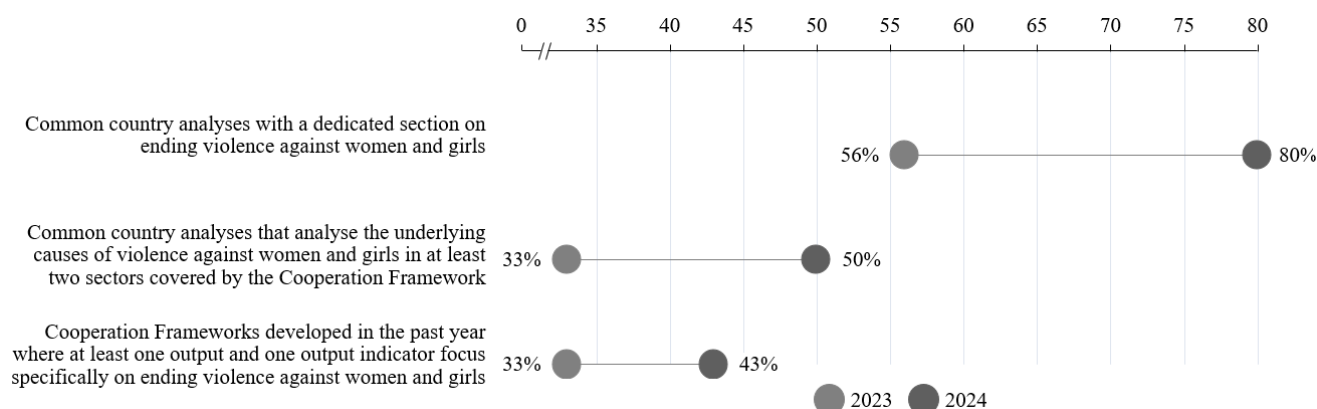
154. The United Nations Sustainable Development Group also issued mandatory guidance on applying the gender equality marker, with 46 country teams allocating at least 70 per cent of their annual funding to activities promoting gender equality. Furthermore, 44 per cent of new Cooperation Frameworks mainstreamed gender equality, and one third included stand-alone outcomes.

155. Looking ahead, the United Nations will enhance transparency by requiring each entity to publish gender marker-based funding data starting in 2026. Currently, only 29 per cent of entities report on gender marker implementation to governing bodies. Financial constraints remain an obstacle for fully supporting United Nations development system in-country programming: only 16 United Nations development system entities met the target of dedicating 15 per cent of resources to gender-focused activities.

156. United Nations advocacy efforts in 2024 helped to prevent regression on laws addressing harmful traditional practices, supported the African Union Convention on Ending Violence against Women and Girls and contributed to a Human Rights Council resolution on technology-facilitated gender-based violence. The Spotlight Initiative of the United Nations and the European Union continued its comprehensive efforts to eliminate violence against women and girls, with new programmes in three countries and one region already securing a \$100 million funding pipeline.

Figure 21

Percentage of United Nations country team instruments with dedicated analyses and indicators on ending violence against women and girls



Source: UN-Women, 2025.

VII. Implementation of the funding compact and funding trends

A. The road thus far in implementing the funding compact

157. In 2024, the United Nations continued to prioritize flexible and sufficient funding as essential to scaling effective support for sustainable development. The adoption of a new funding compact between the United Nations Sustainable Development Group and Member States in July 2024 marked a key milestone. With 12 mutually reinforcing commitments – 6 from Member States and 6 from the Group – the compact aims to improve efficiency, effectiveness and adaptability in the United Nations development system. The focus is on increasing quality funding, including core and pooled contributions, to better tailor expertise and operations to country needs.

158. Following its adoption, the Development Coordination Office began implementing the funding compact through global and field-level guidance and engagement. Several United Nations entities started developing individual monitoring frameworks and initiated funding dialogues around the new funding compact with their governing bodies. At the country level, resident coordinators led compact dialogues in 34 countries, with 51 more planned in early 2025. These dialogues are key to aligning contributing country support with development outcomes, making contributing countries' participation critical to maximizing the effectiveness of their assistance and yielding the full impact of the funding compact.

159. Preliminary data from 2024 show encouraging progress. The proportion of United Nations country teams with joint workplans linked to outcomes increased from 74 per cent in 2023 to 91 per cent in 2024. Similarly, more teams now have multi-year funding frameworks and publish annual funding plans. There has also been growth in joint resource mobilization strategies (79 per cent of teams, up from 61 per cent in 2023). Meanwhile, the share of non-core funding from non-Member State contributors rose to 38 per cent in 2023, showing some success in diversifying the donor base. However, the share of core or unearmarked voluntary contributions from Member States in 2023 remained low at 13 per cent, still well below the 30 per cent target.

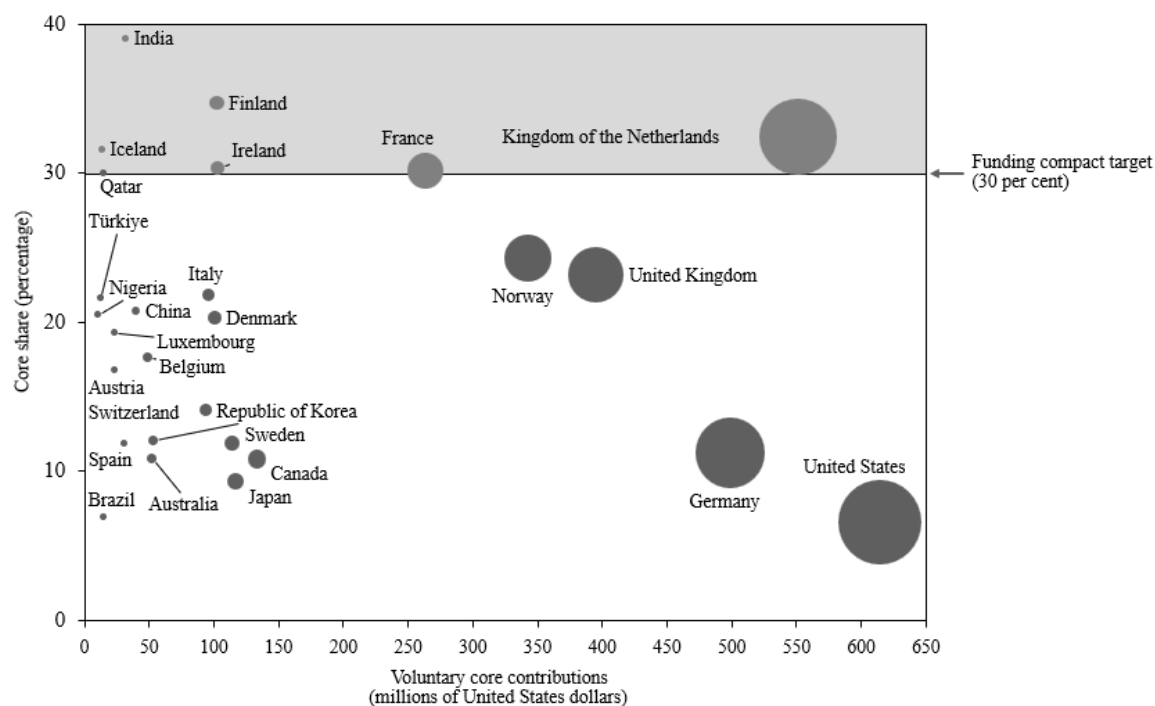
160. While contributions to pooled funds such as the Joint Sustainable Development Goals Fund and the Peacebuilding Fund increased significantly in 2023, key

indicators for effective aid, such as the proportion of non-core funding that is flexible and the number of contributors providing 30 per cent or more of their total voluntary funding as core funding, have declined. This backslide threatens the ability of the United Nations system to plan and operate effectively. Although 27 Member States exceeded the \$10 million voluntary core funding threshold in 2023 (up from 20 in 2022), only 7 met the target of providing 30 per cent of voluntary contributions as core funding.

161. Recognizing these challenges, I called upon the senior United Nations leadership to scale up joint resource mobilization and strategic planning for pooled funds, especially across the Joint Sustainable Development Goals Fund, the Central Emergency Response Fund and the Peacebuilding Fund. I continue to urge funding partners to align their contributions with the new funding compact and ensure coherent messaging across embassies and missions about the importance of shifting towards more flexible funding. As global fiscal pressures mount, the funding compact remains a vital framework to guide both the strategic deployment of limited aid resources and efforts to build a more responsive, unified and impactful United Nations development system.

Figure 22

Volume and share of all voluntary contributions by top contributors of voluntary core funding, 2023



Source: CEB, 2025.

B. Rooting reforms and scaling up results through a fully funded resident coordinator system

162. Six years on from the repositioning, the resident coordinator system has been cemented at the core of the development system. As reflected in the report of the Chair of the United Nations Sustainable Development Group (E/2025/61), the resident coordinators are at the forefront of the United Nations shift to programmes,

marshalling the breadth of United Nations support. However, global challenges are mounting and expanding, and countries are looking to resident coordinators to serve as a guide for the United Nations in their country.

163. In the past year alone, resident coordinators have supported over 160 countries. They have leveraged the United Nations system to support host countries engaging in crucial global dialogues, including the twenty-ninth session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. In 2024, 44 new Cooperation Frameworks were developed, 10 of which started implementation in 2025, and 34 are expected to finalize design in 2025 and start implementation in 2026. Globally, the resident coordinators are working to coordinate over \$20 billion annually in United Nations programming.

164. Over the course of 2024, I prioritized the securing of resources for the resident coordinator system to enable the system to deliver on the expectations of Member States. The General Assembly decided to provide increased resources – \$53 million – from the regular budget for the resident coordinator system. While the resources provide a higher level of predictability in the funding base for the system, they fall short of the needed resourcing. Therefore, the resident coordinator system continues to be reliant on voluntary contributions by Member States. Moreover, in the current fiscal context, we count on the entities of the United Nations Sustainable Development Group to continue to make their vital contributions.

165. In 2024, donor contributions to the special purpose trust fund continued at similar levels as in 2023, amounting to approximately \$202.1 million at the end of the year. In total, 26 countries and the European Union made commitments in 2024, including 2 developing countries. Ten multi-year agreements ran through 2024, with three concluding at the end of the year and seven continuing into 2025. This still represented a shortfall of \$79.7 million.

166. As requested by the General Assembly, a refined, comprehensive and detailed report on the financing and governance of the resident coordinator system will be presented to the General Assembly at its eighty-first session. This will include the requested comprehensive review of all possible funding models and streams, including adjustments to the coordination levy and cost-sharing arrangements. A review of the structure of resident coordinator offices will be conducted to ensure that resource requirements are tailored to the context and needs of host countries.

167. A fully funded and capacitated resident coordinator system is a key tenet in rooting the reforms across the system. I look forward to working closely with Member States to achieve these goals and ensure the sustainability and effectiveness of the resident coordinator system.

VIII. Conclusion

168. Led by resident coordinators on the ground and in alignment with the Sustainable Development Goals and national development priorities, the United Nations development system is increasingly positioned to support Member States in meeting their needs.

169. There is no question that the world faces grave concerns and urgent needs in the areas of poverty alleviation, inclusion, human rights, climate and the roles of institutions, among other areas. This makes the role of the United Nations development system even more important, as it provides a proven and effective channel to invest in the development fundamentals required to reach the Goals.

170. At a moment where risks of regression are acute, the United Nations development system must pull together as never before. The system has advanced in delivering results, and we will continue to be clear and concrete in reporting them, including for core resources. We will address remaining points of misalignment in programming and operations, including strengthening the tailoring of our in-country footprint, and will continue to maximize efficiencies, building on another record year in realizing efficiency gains. Momentum behind these efforts will grow through a firm commitment to continue strengthening the role of the resident coordinator system and to realizing agreed objectives under the funding compact. In the next year, we look to see Member States enhance delivery of their commitments under the funding compact. Improved evaluation and other systems for learning and transparency, such as the System-Wide Evaluation Office, are key for deepening accountability and responsiveness to the full spectrum of needs among Member States.

171. Looking ahead, strengthening regional support to country-level implementation will require ensuring that regional mechanisms are positioned to deliver timely, demand-driven expertise aligned with national priorities, including by more deliberately structuring and leveraging existing regional policy, analytical and convening capacities – including those of the regional commissions – to enhance impact on the ground.

172. As we look to the upcoming Fourth International Conference on Financing for Development and the Second World Summit for Social Development, there will be many opportunities to support operational delivery through the United Nations development system. The Second World Summit for Social Development builds on the legacy of the World Summit for Social Development, held in Copenhagen in 1995, which emphasized commitments to social inclusion, eradicating poverty and achieving full, productive employment and decent work. The Fourth International Conference on Financing for Development provides a space for leaders across Governments, international organizations, financial institutions, businesses and more to come together on reforming financing, including support for reform of the international financial architecture and efforts to address the financial challenges impairing the urgent investments needed to scale up the Sustainable Development Goals.

173. As we mark eight decades of the United Nations, we look forward with urgency and commitment as we near the 2030 timeline. While the journey is far from complete, the United Nations development system must continue efforts to deliver transformative actions in countries. These efforts rely on adequate funding, which is conducive to the United Nations delivering in a coherent and effective manner. With robust partnerships and the provision of policy expertise, the United Nations stands ready to support Member States with realizing a lasting impact and the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals.
