



SDG 16 CONFERENCE

Peace, Justice & Inclusive Societies



SDG 16 as a compass for navigating intersecting crises

30 May – 1 June 2023
Rome, Italy

CONCEPT NOTE

I. Objectives and approach

The objectives of the 2023 SDG 16 Conference are to:

- Review progress on the implementation of SDG 16, halfway to the target date of 2030, identify policies, measures and good practices that accelerate progress and obstacles that need to be addressed, and explore how SDG 16 can play a role in addressing some of the global crises the world is facing.
- Contribute to the preparations and deliberations of intergovernmental meetings on the 2030 Agenda – the HLPF in July and SDG Summit in September as well as other high-level meetings (e.g., the UNCAC COSP, The Summit of the Future etc.), including through securing high-level representation from governments, UN entities and intergovernmental organizations, civil society and other stakeholders.

With these objectives in mind, the focus of the 2023 Conference, in addition to discussing progress and challenges related to SDG 16 itself, will be to highlight the catalytic effect that progress towards peace, justice and inclusive, effective, and accountable institutions can have on addressing some of the most significant crises facing the world today and achieving sustainable development.

The Sustainable Development Goals Report 2022 paints a particularly sobering picture. It reveals that the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is in grave jeopardy due to multiple, cascading, and intersecting crises. These crises and their complex interactions, impact all of the Goals, creating spin-off crises in food and nutrition, health, education, the environment, and

peace and security. To put the world on track to sustainability will require concerted action on a global scale.¹

Framing the 2023 Conference around the contribution of SDG 16 to addressing global crises will reflect the SDG Summit's emphasis on the impact of multiple and interlocking crises the world faces, including the deterioration of key social, economic, and environmental indicators.²

The approach of the Conference seeks to elevate the level of participation of high-level representatives of governments, UN entities and civil society in the plenary sessions by addressing issues that are high on the agenda of policymakers and are conducive to multi-stakeholder dialogue. The conference will also invite the co-facilitators of various intergovernmental processes at the UN, including for the SDG Summit.

II. Concept

At a time when intersecting crises of conflict, lack of trust and climate have combined to pose a formidable challenge to peace and sustainable development, the 2030 Agenda provides a framework for renewed multilateralism and the international community to collaborate on shared challenges, build resilience and chart a course for a more peaceful, just, and sustainable future.

Halfway through the period of implementation of the 2030 Agenda, the world is lagging behind on achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. The COVID-19 pandemic has negatively impacted progress on most if not all of the Goals.³ As highlighted in the last two editions of the Conference, SDG 16 has been hit particularly hard. The pandemic exposed and exacerbated existing fragilities and inequalities and put the resilience of public institutions to the test. Around the world, human rights and the rule of law are under attack, trust in institutions is declining, civic space is shrinking, and the justice gap continues to grow dangerously wide.

SDG 16, in addition to being a standalone goal, is also an enabler of all other SDGs. It is at the heart of what makes the 2030 Agenda transformative, and it can play a vital role in addressing the key challenges that the world is currently facing. The causes and effects of these crises – and the actions needed to address them – are interconnected and deeply rooted in issues of human rights, justice, equity, inclusion, accountability, and good governance.

The 2023 SDG 16 Conference will explore these interlinkages and the catalytic contribution SDG 16 can make. Specifically, it will help to identify solutions to inform the development of the UN's New Agenda for Peace, restore trust in public institutions, and accelerate transformative action to respond to crises of food systems and climate change. Throughout, sessions will

¹ <https://www.un.org/development/desa/dspd/2022/07/sdgs-report/>

² <https://www.un.org/en/conferences/SDGSummit2023/programme>

³ <https://www.un.org/development/desa/dspd/2022/07/sdgs-report/>

integrate the perspectives of youth and women and consider crosscutting dimensions, such as digitalization.

Theme 1: Promoting the UN’s New Agenda for Peace

Violent conflicts – on the increase since 2010– have become one of the most significant challenges to sustainable development, with the war in Ukraine and its global ramifications being the latest and most stark reminder. The UN’s New Agenda for Peace seeks to “reshape responses to all forms of violence”⁴ and boost investment in prevention and peacebuilding by addressing the root causes of conflict, many of which are linked to injustice, inequalities, and exclusion. Effective and inclusive institutions and the rule of law can be key to preventing disputes and grievances from escalating into conflicts, and laying the foundations for peace, reconciliation, and sustainable development.

Sub-themes:

- Effective responses and managing risks
- Using the rule of law to prevent violent conflicts
- Advancing the women, peace and security agenda

Theme 2: Restoring trust in public institutions

Across the world, public institutions are facing a crisis of confidence at a time they are most needed to tackle our common challenges and build more peaceful, just and inclusive societies. Shared societal, people-centered values and principles should be reflected in greater transparency, accountability, and inclusion, reduced corruption, participatory policymaking, and innovations in service delivery. Such measures can help rebuild public confidence and promote the “whole of society” approaches needed to achieve the transformative vision of the 2030 Agenda.

Sub-themes:

- Strengthening accountability and transparency and tackling corruption
- Promoting gender equality, inclusion and participation
- Leveraging digital government to navigate intersecting crises and build resilience

⁴ <https://press.un.org/en/2021/sgsm20985.doc.htm>

Theme 3: Promoting participatory decision-making to accelerate transformative action: food systems and climate change

Governments should engage with people as partners in the shared challenge of building more peaceful, just, and inclusive societies. Empowering people and communities to claim their rights and participate in policymaking is not only a core principle of good governance; it can help build resilience, safeguard development gains and catalyze transformative action to achieve the 2030 Agenda. It is especially important in the face of global crises that demand “whole of society” solutions. Through the lens of food systems and climate change, this theme will examine how inclusive and participatory governance can help address global crises and accelerate progress towards sustainable development.

Sub-themes:

- Effective and inclusive governance for food systems transformation
- Equitable and inclusive land governance
- Participation and engagement for inclusive climate action

In addition, three plenary sessions of the Conference will be dedicated respectively to:

- Measuring progress/taking stock on SDG 16 at the halfway mark. This session is directly geared to inform the global stocktaking of progress that will take place at the SDG Summit.
- The way forward – SDG Summit and Beyond. This session aims to link the lessons from the Conference to upcoming intergovernmental events and processes, including the SDG Summit and various work tracks in preparation for the Summit of the Future in 2024 and its preparatory ministerial meeting in September 2023.
- Partnerships for SDG 16 implementation. This session aims to explore how partnerships can be enhanced to accelerate the implementation of SDG 16.

III. Format

The Conference will be a three-day meeting in person, consisting of:

- High-level plenary sessions, with interventions from high-level panelists.
- Parallel working sessions, with interventions from panelists followed by a moderated discussion.
- Knowledge exchange pitches to build capacity and promote good practices
- Short creative sessions will complement the agenda and give space for participants to engage and shape the Conference’s deliberations.

The format will primarily focus on in-person participation in Rome, although some high-level participants might join virtually. The plenary sessions will be live cast through the social media channels of the organizers.

Different custodian agencies of SDG 16 indicators will be asked to provide a short video (or recorded statement) outlining data and progress.

IV. Participation and organization

Building on the success of the multi-stakeholder approach, participants will consist of high-level representatives, policy makers, experts and practitioners from governments, the UN system and other international organizations, including the presidents of the General Assembly and ECOSOC and the co-facilitators of various relevant ongoing processes under these bodies,⁵ think tanks, academia, civil society organizations and the private sector and other relevant stakeholders from a number of sectors, including the political and peacebuilding, environmental and justice sectors, development cooperation, economic planning, health and finance. The organizers will include young women and men in as many sessions as possible.

An online pre-registration process will be in place for those wishing to indicate their interest in attending in person.

V. Outcomes of the conference

As was the case for the previous editions, the Conference's main messages and key recommendations will be synthesized in an outcome document, which will be distributed to all UN Member States and submitted as an input to the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development. The outcome will contribute to the preparations for the SDG Summit, the UN Food System Stocktaking Moment, and the Summit of the Future. The outcome will also be posted on the website of the Conference. A dissemination plan for the report and any other outputs would also be developed.

In addition, the organizers will seek to highlight the outcomes of the Conference in other multilateral forums.

⁵ The co-facilitators of the various relevant processes in the General Assembly and ECOSOC include: the permanent representatives of Ireland and Qatar to the UN in New York, the co-facilitators for the political declaration of the SDG Summit; the permanent representatives of Botswana and Luxembourg to the UN in New York, the co-facilitators for the preparatory process for the High-level Dialogue on Financing for Development (FfD); the permanent representatives of Germany and Namibia to the UN in New York, the co-facilitators for a) the scope of the Summit of the Future, the topics and organization of the interactive dialogues at the Summit and the negotiations process; and b) the outcome of the Summit ("A Pact for the Future"); the permanent representatives of Jamaica and the Netherlands to the UN in New York, the co-facilitators for Declaration on Future Generations; and permanent representatives of Rwanda and Sweden to the UN in New York, the co-facilitators for the Global Digital Compact.

VI. Languages and documentation

Simultaneous interpretation will be provided in English, French, Italian and Spanish for plenary sessions.

The documentation for the Conference in English, French, Italian and Spanish will be available online through the Conference website, which will also include presentations, videos, papers, and remarks when they become available.