



## Leaving no one behind: the role of human rights in reforming the sovereign debt architecture and going beyond GDP

11 February 2025 | 10:00-17:00 CET |

### Concept Note

#### Seventh Intersessional Meeting of the Human Rights Council on Human Rights and the 2030 Agenda

**Date time:** Tuesday 11 February 2025 – 10:00 – 17:00 CET

**Venue:** Room XX

**Mandate:** The 2025 Intersessional Meeting is the seventh in a series of intersessional meetings of the Human Rights Council (HRC) on human rights and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. It is mandated by Resolution [A/HRC/RES/52/14](#) of April 2023.

**Objectives:** The objectives of the Intersessional Meeting are to:

- (a) provide a space for States, relevant UN and regional human rights mechanisms, UN agencies, funds and programmes, national human rights institutions (NHRIs), local, national and regional governments, and civil society organizations (CSOs) to voluntarily share good practices, achievements, challenges, and lessons learned concerning integrated and gender responsive approaches in the promotion and protection of human rights and the implementation of the 2030 Agenda.
- (b) explore further measures that the HRC could take to support accelerated realization of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), in particular eradicating poverty and enhancing gender equality at the national level, including reaffirming calls to strengthen financing.
- (c) enhance understanding of the relationship between the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF) and human rights processes and mechanisms, as well as identify opportunities to strengthen cooperation.

**Description:** The Intersessional meeting will base its discussions on the theme of the [2025 HLPF](#) “Advancing sustainable, inclusive, science- and evidence-based solutions for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its Sustainable Development Goals for leaving no one behind”.

The SDGs to be reviewed in-depth are Goals 3, 5, 8, 14 and 17.





Without prejudice to the integrated, indivisible, and interlinked nature of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the seventh intersessional meeting will emphasise **SDG17** (Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development), **SDG5** (achieving gender equality), and the central promise of the 2030 Agenda - **Leave No One Behind (LNOB)**.

The discussion will draw on the commitments made by States at the [2023 SDG Summit](#) and in the [Pact for the Future \(PTF\)](#)<sup>1</sup>, focusing on a) supporting developing countries in achieving long-term debt sustainability through coordinated policies on debt financing, relief, and restructuring to reduce debt distress (**SDG target 17.4**) and b) develop measurements of progress on sustainable development that complement gross domestic product (**SDG target 17.19**).

Building on the outcomes of the SDG Summit and the Summit of the Future (September 2023 and 2024, respectively), the intersessional meeting will comprise **two sessions**, one aimed at discussing how human rights norms and standards can guide the **global debt architecture review** called for in PTF (Action 50); and the second to **develop a framework on measures of progress on sustainable development to complement and go beyond gross domestic product** (Action 53) that integrates human rights, consideration for climate action and multidimensional vulnerabilities, the care and support economy, and gender equality.

These reforms are pivotal to resuming and accelerating progress in implementing the 2030 Agenda and advancing human rights to eradicate poverty and combat widening inequalities within and between countries. They are essential in preventing further erosion of international relations and maintaining trust in the multilateral system.

Furthermore, the SDG Summit and the Summit of the Future outcome documents reaffirm the critical importance of achieving the SDGs for all segments of society without leaving anyone behind. Member States explicitly commit to endeavouring to reach the furthest behind first (para 2, SDG Summit Outcome) and in the PTF, the LNOB principle is integral, not only to the sustainable development chapter, but also as a guiding thread throughout the document and its annexes. With the fourth International Conference on Financing for Development in sight, the intersessional meeting will focus the discussion on ways of advancing the reforms in a manner that pays particular attention to addressing the situation of the most marginalized segments of our societies.

## Background

The 2023 SDG Summit, the 2024 Summit of the Future, as well as various other assessments of progress made on the implementation of the 2030 Agenda raise alarms about the slow progress or even regression in achieving the goals and targets set by Member States in 2015. The SDGs are in peril. More than 40 per cent of the world's population - about 3.3 billion people - live in countries that spend more on debt interest payments than on education or health. Developing countries are increasingly faced with high and growing costs of external debt, with direct impacts on public budgets that has undermined the realization of human rights.

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<sup>1</sup> For more information, see <https://www.un.org/en/summit-of-the-future/pact-for-the-future>.





In the Pact for the Future – adopted in September 2024 – States reiterated the centrality of human rights in sustainable development, identified the enhancement of human rights enjoyment as a key goal, and stated that every commitment in the Pact is ‘fully consistent and aligned with international law, including human rights law’ (para 13).

The Pact for the Future affirms the commitment to reforming the international financial architecture. While expressing deep concern for high and unsustainable debt burdens in developing countries, Member States emphasize the urgency of reforms to escape debt overhang, and prioritizing government expenditure on the SDGs, it invites the International Monetary Fund to undertake a review of ways to strengthen and improve the sovereign debt architecture, building on existing international processes, in collaboration with the UN Secretary-General, the World Bank, the Group of 20, major bilateral creditors, and debtors, and requests that the Secretary-General update Member States on progress and present proposals on this issue.

The intersessional meeting will provide a timely discussion on how human rights provide essential guardrails in building a more equitable and democratic global debt architecture that is more responsive to states’ obligations under international human rights law and the challenges of developing countries. This discussion is urgent and timely as we approach the fourth International Conference on Financing for Development (June 2025).

Furthermore, the PTF called for the development of measures of progress on sustainable development that complement and go beyond gross domestic product. It requested the Secretary-General to establish an independent high-level expert group to develop recommendations for a limited number of country-owned and universally applicable indicators of sustainable development that complement and go beyond gross domestic product taking into account the work of the Statistical Commission, building on the global indicator framework for the SDGs and targets of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and to present the outcome of its work during the eightieth session of the General Assembly in September 2025 with a view to initiate a United Nations-led intergovernmental process.

The importance of factoring human rights and gender indicators into the development of measures that complement and go beyond GDP is well reflected in the SG policy brief ‘Valuing What Counts: Framework to Progress Beyond Gross Domestic Product’<sup>2</sup> issued ahead of the Summit of the Future. The intersessional meeting will amplify the reflections and conclusions in the SG’s policy brief by exploring further the development of these measures.

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<sup>2</sup> See <https://www.un.org/sites/un2.un.org/files/our-common-agenda-policy-brief-beyond-gross-domestic-product-en.pdf>.

