

Forum: General Assembly 1

Issue: Establishing measures of cooperation among member states to achieve the sustainable development goals

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Introduction

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) refer to the 17 interconnected goals set in the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) in 2015. The SDGs were developed as a future global development framework succeeding the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). With 193 countries working to achieve the goals by 2030, the SDGs intend to bring “peace and prosperity” to all people around the world.

Since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, over 100 million people were pushed back to extreme poverty, more women have experienced domestic violence, and the global average temperature reached 1.2°C above pre-industrial levels. With these socioeconomic and environmental failures, global efforts toward the SDGs have come to a halt or even reversed. Notably, the pandemic has had the largest impact on less economically developed countries (LEDCs) by forcing their governments and industries to increase short-term spending to protect livelihoods over making long-term investments in health, education, and infrastructure.

Efforts towards the SDGs were insufficient even before the COVID-19 pandemic. Decent progress had been made in child health, poverty reduction, and gender equality, but were falling short of achieving the goals by 2030. For other areas, progress had been extremely slow or limited to a few parts of the world.

With the current scale and pace of progress, the United Nations (UN) predicts that countries will fail to achieve the SDG by 2030. Cooperation between countries could be a step forward in achieving the SDGs.

Definition of Key Terms

Cooperation

The act of strategic collaboration between competing parties aiming for mutually beneficial outcomes. Cooperation is most common in the business sector but can also be employed in other sectors.

Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

Abbreviation of “Sustainable Development Goals”. SDGs are 17 interlinked goals were set in the UN general assembly in 2015. All 193 member states take part in achieving this goal by 2030.

Measures

Methods of achieving something. In the context of the topic, Measures may include policies, legislation, regulations, etc.

Official Development Assistance (ODA)

ODA is often measured through resource/aid flows to developing countries. The primary purpose of ODA is to combat poverty and foster development. ODA can be in the form of bilateral grants or loans, and is often channeled through international organizations such as the World Bank or the International Monetary Fund.

Foreign Direct Investment (FDI)

FDI is an investment in a business by an entity located in another country with the purpose of establishing long-term interests. Investors take some or all control of the business in return.

Foreign Portfolio Investment (FPI)

FPI is a passive investment by an entity located in another country in financial assets such as stocks and bonds. FPI's main goal is to generate short-term gains without directly interfering with management.

Gross National Income (GNI)

Simply put, GNI keeps track of how much a country's people and businesses make annually. GNI can often indicate the wealth of a country and is calculated by adding income from overseas sources to the GDP.

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Background

History of SDGs

The 17 SDGs were set up in the UN General Assembly in 2015 succeeding the MDGs. The SDGs' purpose was to fill in the gaps of MDGs. Specifically, the 8th MDG (To develop a global partnership for development) created a rise in "donor-recipient" relationships. Unlike the MDGs, the SDGs also encompass developed countries in their goals, aiming towards global "peace and prosperity" through collective action.

Two years after the introduction of SDGs, on July 6th, 2017, a resolution outlining specific targets and indicators for each goal was passed in the General Assembly. The purpose of targets and indicators was to narrow down the goals into smaller and more realistic actions. On average, each goal holds between 8 and 12 targets, with each target having around 4 indicators that measure the progress towards achieving the target. These targets and indicators were reviewed and amended at the UN Statistical Commission in 2020, providing greater clarity and reality to the goals.

Historical Examples of Coopetition

Coopetition is becoming increasingly common in the business sector, especially in the tech industry. At a fundamental level, coopetition can help companies cut down unnecessary costs and efforts. Samsung providing its OLED displays for Apple's iPhone X is a notable example of coopetition. Samsung could have damaged Apple's presence in the high-end Smartphone market by not selling its displays and giving its Galaxy smartphones a boost. However, collaboration would return Samsung with additional revenue for iPhone sales and an opportunity to further develop its display technologies. From Apple's perspective, collaboration would give its rival a financial advantage in the long-term, but the investment was worth keeping the iPhone competing in the high-end smartphone market. In conclusion, the cooperation between the two companies was mutually beneficial as Samsung had one of the best displays while Apple had a loyal customer base.

Cooperation between the United States and the Soviet Union during the space race is a prime example of coopetition between two countries. President Kennedy first proposed the idea of collaboration in 1961 when he met with Khrushchev, but his idea was never implemented until 1975, when the Cold War rivals collaborated on the Apollo-Soyuz mission. In the mission, both countries docked their spaceships in orbit for two days and performed scientific experiments together. By 1988, the two countries managed the ISS, announcing the start of international cooperation in Space. Today, an increasing number of companies and countries are attempting to explore the Moon and Mars through cooperation.

SDG #17

With various humanitarian crises caused by natural disasters and/or political conflicts, financial resources and aid are in high demand. SDG #17 (Partnerships for the Goals) seeks to assist countries in need through global cooperation. This goal encourages partnerships between governments, businesses, and the public, both at local and international levels. By sharing the same values and visions, a collaboration between different stakeholders and countries boosts progress towards achieving the other SDGs by 2030.

This goal has 17 targets across five categories: finance, technology, capacity building, trade, and systemic issues. In particular, a large emphasis is placed on co-planned investment initiatives and mutually beneficial trade systems. The UN estimates that in order to achieve all the SDGs by 2030, at least US\$5 trillion needs to be invested annually. In order to meet this amount, target 17.2 suggests that developed countries commit 0.7 percent of their respective gross national income (GNI) for official development assistance (ODA) to developing countries. Furthermore, target 17.10 insists on the creation of a universal trading system under the World Trade Organization (WTO).

COVID-19 Pandemic

Although in varying degrees, the COVID-19 pandemic has impacted all of the SDGs in a negative way. Most notably, the global extreme poverty rate rose for the first time in two decades, with roughly 120 million people pushed back to extreme poverty. Other areas were also set back by the pandemic, imposing a serious challenge to overcome in the next decade.

On top of that, the pandemic has deterred the collection of data, which is vital in measuring the progress through the indicators. For instance, according to respective national statistical offices, about 42 percent of countries had to postpone censuses for over a year. Such deprivation of data can lead to inaccurate policies and initiatives in the future.

The COVID-19 pandemic has also revealed how competition can lead to disastrous results. For example, in the United States, states were racing to acquire personal protective equipment (PPE) for its citizens. The problem with this approach was that larger, wealthier states such as California out-bid smaller states, causing shortages in many states. A lack of national strategy and coordination between states was the main cause of chaos during the initial stages of the pandemic in the United States.

International Financial Support and Investment

The COVID-19 pandemic has limited international cooperation as many countries faced imminent problems within their borders. This has widened the gap between MEDCs and LEDCs and further polarized different economic classes. According to the 2021 UN annual SDG report, foreign direct investment (FDI) dropped from US\$1.5 trillion in 2019 to US\$1.0 trillion in 2020. Lockdown policies that slow existing investment projects, along with a prospect of a long-term recession, are the main reasons for deterring investors from taking action. In the short term, FDI is expected to remain under \$1.0 trillion dollars as new COVID-19 variants are being discovered and vaccine rollout under speed.

A positive takeaway from the report could be that the net ODA reached an all-time high of \$161 billion in 2020, a 7 percent rise from the previous year. Most developed countries were able to maintain their commitments, and some were even successful in mobilizing additional funds. However, this amount only represents 0.32 percent of the GNI of the donor countries, falling short of the 0.7 percent target.

Undoubtedly, the pandemic has caused many countries to fall into debt, making them unable to implement progressive policies in recovery. This only exacerbates international investment situations, and hence strengthening multilateralism is becoming more important.

Additional Problems

About half of the global population had limited or no access to the Internet during the pandemic. Roughly 86 percent of the population in North America and Europe were using the internet, enabling them to work, learn, and shop remotely during lockdown periods. This is contrasted with Southern Asia and sub-Saharan Africa where only about a quarter of people are connected to the Internet. The main challenges of connecting everyone online are the cost of Internet access, acquirement of electronic devices, and the lack of related skills.

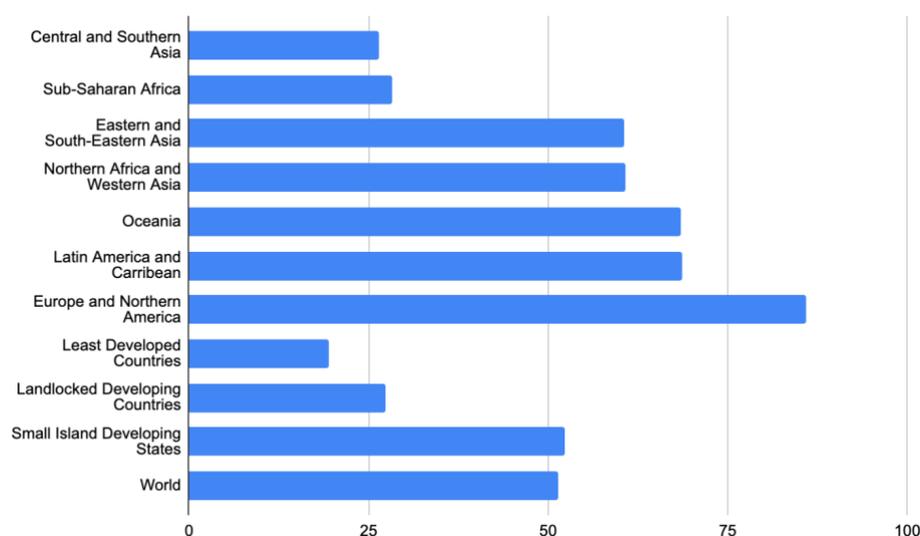


Figure 1. Individuals Using the Internet (United Nations, 2019)

On top of that, the funding for data collection and analysis showed a minute decrease in 2019. Despite a surge in demand for data during the pandemic, financial support has been insufficient to advise adequate policymaking and regulations. A recent survey of national statistical offices found that 63 percent of LEDCs are in need of additional funding for data collection and analysis to overcome challenges posed by COVID-19. In 2020, only a fraction of countries were able to fully fund their statistical plan. With the new COVID-19 variants and lockdowns, countries are bound to face difficulties in implementing their future statistical plans.

Other Obstacles and Challenges

Data Deprivation

As previously mentioned, data has to be collected and analyzed continuously to measure the success of an SDG indicator. However, many nations do not have enough data points to arrive at a meaningful conclusion. For instance, according to a study by World Bank, more than half of 155 countries lacked recent poverty data. The lack of reliable data makes it impossible to implement adequate policies. In worse-case scenarios, countries may have to rely their policies on outdated data.

Priority

Promoting certain SDGs could negatively affect the progress of other SDGs. For example, a potential trade-off exists between SDG #2 (Zero Hunger) and SDG #15 (Life on Land). One solution to world hunger is agricultural expansion. However, agriculture expansion consumes a significant amount of land and water, hence hindering the preservation of natural forests and oceans. Thus, it is vital for governments and businesses to seek efficient strategies to minimize detrimental effects on other SDGs.

Corruption

Corruption has a negative effect on equality, economic growth, and the quality of administrative environments. Corruption can lead to ineffective allocation of resources by spoiling incentives and distorting market forces. This can further stress businesses as corruption acts as an additional tax, leading

to an increase in costs of production and less profit to investors. Corruption occurs more frequently in developing countries as developing countries tend to have weaker legal frameworks and court systems.

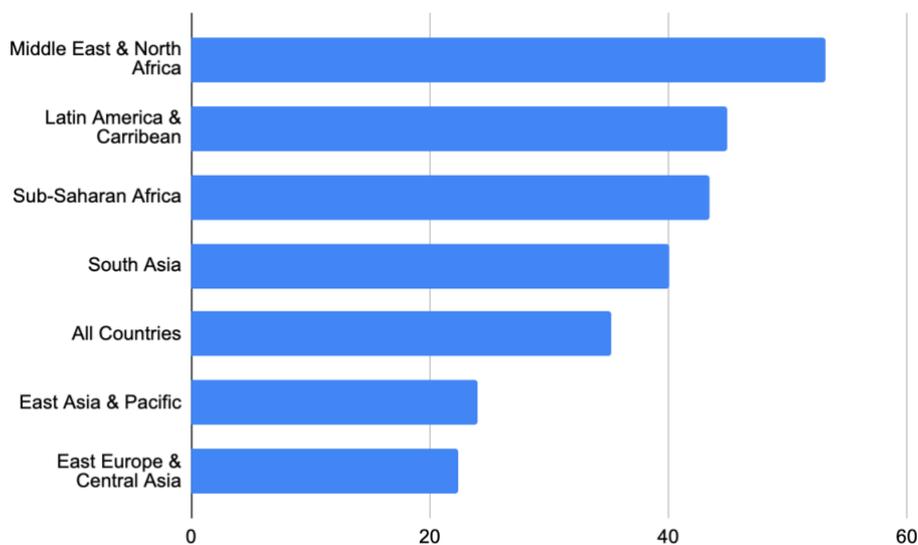


Figure 2. Firms Identifying Corruption as a Major Constraint by Region (World Bank, 2015)

Accountability

In 2015, UN member states have agreed to endorse the 17 SDGs, but the issue of accountability is left unsolved. A mechanism for tracking accountability is nonexistent, and this leaves individual countries irresponsible for their actions. For instance, LEDCs may experience a larger burden of meeting the goals due to the MEDCs lacking ODAs. Regardless of the country’s economic circumstance, countries will have to agree on effective and continuous action to make a meaningful impact.

Major Parties Involved

G20

The G20 is an intergovernmental forum comprised of 19 of the most influential nations and the European Union. One of the most recent acts of cooperation between these nations is the competition between the pharmaceutical companies, as aforementioned. This cooperation was able to streamline the process of creating and manufacturing the vaccines in order to tackle the most recent pandemic. Not only this competition between the pharmaceutical companies to address SDG 3, but these nations also initiated competition and collaboration between companies to contribute to the increase of developing nation’s economy.

United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA)

UNDESA promotes and initiates different major intergovernmental conferences and conversations to facilitate conversations on various issues around the world. There are several divisions under this agency including the Division for Sustainable Development Goals. This division focuses on providing different governments and

organizations with support to achieve the SDGs by forming different aiding programs and partnerships. As this division serves as the secretariat for the SDGs, granted by the GA resolution of 70/299, there are several different ways this organization can contribute to promoting cooperation. One example can be through the utilization of the 2030 Agenda Partnership Accelerator provided by this division, nations will be able to provide relevant stakeholders and companies within their nation with the support they need to foster a fair environment for cooperation among and within different industries.

World Trade Organization (WTO)

The World Trade Organization serves the purpose of facilitating fair international trade as well as regulating various trade disputes. WTO can guide different key member nations to form policies and initiatives that can promote cooperation among different organizations as means to achieve the SDGs. Not only this organization cooperates with different agencies such as the UNDESA, but also sets specific goals within the organization to contribute to the SDGs; the SDG goals that WTO is focusing on includes “Decent Work and Economic Growth”, “Industry, Innovation, and Infrastructure”, “Reduced Inequalities”, “Life below Water”, “Partnerships for Goals”, and many more. Specifically focusing on goals eight and nine, WTO’s goal for a fair open market will be able to promote fair and significant cooperation to reach the goal of innovation and change.

United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)

The United Nations Environment Programme is a UN department that focuses on every environmental aspect, such as environmental policy implementation, and the authority for intergovernmental environmental conversations. This department focuses on all the environmental goals of the SDGs and provides various methods to achieve such goals that are listed. Some notable efforts made by the UNEP include the Montreal Protocol, publishing annual reports on different environmental problems and posing possible implications, as well as contributing to the different global environmental conferences. As UNEP is an environmental intergovernmental agency, they will be able to help promote cooperation for the environmental goals. Some contributions might include The Medium-Term Strategy (MTS) to guide the key member nations to set specific goals for their industries to contribute, cooperate, and compete to successfully address the SDGs.

Austria

Austria is the top sixth nation to contribute to achieving the SDGs and showed a prominent and consistent effort to further contribute. Though it is the sixth nation in contribution, Austria is one of the prime examples of utilizing competition as a method to effectively contribute. One of the first priorities they have set in achieving the goals is acknowledging the importance of public awareness in the SDGs. The Austrian Development Agency (ADA) proposed several different solutions to implement educational curriculums for the general public, which is extremely important to promote competition among companies who are thriving to adhere to the public’s wants and needs. They have recognized such awareness building as a significant first step for greater public and political engagement. Austria also has shown contribution towards supporting their national industries in the transport sector, providing monetary support for the innovation of new technologies, as well as promoting renewable and

sustainable energy generation. Such political engagement will be able to successfully promote cooperation among different industries.

Timeline of Events

Date	Description of event
September, 2000	United nations millennium summit, declared the united nations millennium declaration
July 9th, 2013	Founding of HLPF (High level Political forum on sustainable development)
September 25-27, 2015	United nations sustainable development summit
January 1, 2016	SDG was officially adopted by the global leaders after the United Nations Sustainable development summit in 2015.
HLPF 2017	Conference reviewing the progress for the 2030 SDG goals under GA and ECOSOC
2020 - current	The covid 19 pandemic, which changed the scope of how the SDG should be achieved
Oct 31 - Nov 12, 2021	COP 26, environmental summit to achieve different goal
2030	The target goal for the SDGs is to be achieved

Previous Attempts to Resolve the Issue

SDGs have been one of the main focuses not only for the UN agencies but for different companies, in general, to contribute to and make a significant difference in the process of sustainable development in the world. There have been countless efforts to address the SDGs, such as the consistent provision of humanitarian aid from the relevant agencies, intergovernmental conferences such as the COP26, policy reforms to implement the proposed national goals, and progress reports from the UN secretariats. Some of the documents can include:

- Transforming our world, the 2030 agenda for Sustainable development; September 25, 2017; Resolution number: **A/RES/70/1**
- Progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals: Report of the Secretary-General; April 30, 2021; Document Number: **E/2021/58**
- Progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals: Report of the Secretary-General; April 28, 2020; Document Number: **E/2020/57**
- Progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals: Report of the Secretary-General; May 8, 2019; Document Number: **E/2019/68**
- Progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals: Report of the Secretary-General; May 10, 2018; Document Number: **E/2018/64**

- Progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals: Report of the Secretary-General; May 11, 2017; Document Number: **E/2017/66**
- Progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals: Report of the Secretary-General; June 03, 2020; Document Number: **E/2016/75**

Such progress reports can be extremely useful for setting the goals for subsequent years or an upcoming year. These efforts from the Secretary-General can be extremely useful in tracking the progress internationally and have been promoting continuous improvement and efforts from the key member nationals that have been participating in achieving the SDGs. Even though these reports are essential, it is not necessarily enough for the governments to show any significant progress throughout the year; therefore, there must be other means, both internationally and nationally to motivate industries and nations to adhere to such goals.

One of the ways that can be suggested is through cooptation among nations and even industries within the nations. Such cooptation will not only promote cooperation among competing sectors but will also prompt competition to streamline the creation of innovations and significant progress. There has not been a significant amount of means to establish this relationship, but there is one notable effort made by the UNWTO (United Nations World Tourism Organization) that has facilitated a fair means for companies all around the world to compete and cooperate to contribute in achieving the SDGs. The “SDGs Global Startup Competition” has called attention to entrepreneurs all around the world to directly contribute to “accelerating the achievement of the SDGs.” Not only was competition this able to facilitate innovation but was able to directly connect this authentic entrepreneurship to opportunities to impact the world on a bigger scale. The 17 categories of the competition tackle each goal in the SDG and the participants were given countless different incentives for them to create their best work by providing the winner with monetary support and guaranteed partnerships with major private corporations.

One of the most recent examples of cooptation in during the COVID-19 pandemic. With about 350 million cases that are exponentially increasing all around the globe, this pandemic has been impacting everyone’s lives. One method that the government suggested is utilizing the method of competition to create a COVID-19 vaccine, which could potentially be the first step in overcoming this pandemic. Major pharmaceutical companies such as Pfizer, Moderna, AstraZeneca, Johnson & Johnson, and other countless companies collaborated while competing to create a vaccine to mitigate the spread of COVID-19. Through these efforts from all the companies, the COVID-19 vaccine was able to get authorized faster than any other vaccine and start tackling these viruses effectively. Though there have been countless controversies surrounding the effectiveness and the reliability of the vaccines, but it is unarguable that these vaccines did contribute to society progressing to return to normal life. This cooptation also helped the world address SDG 3, ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages.

Possible Solutions

- Enhance the efficiency of government spending. According to the International Monetary Fund (IMF), government spending in developing countries is less effective than that of developed countries. This is mainly because developing countries tend to fall behind in governance and experience high levels of corruption. By implementing a modern administrative system along with improving transparency will allow countries to achieve more with less funding. There are multiple ways in which countries can adopt transparency and modern administrative systems. For instance, legal frameworks and court systems can be strengthened to punish criminals and end the vicious cycle of corruption. If countries are experiencing corruption at a scale too large to control, they can find help from international organizations such as the United Nations Convention Against Corruption (UNCAC) and/or the World Bank.
- Revise existing targets and indicators for the SDGs to be more specific in how countries should take action. The current SDG targets are broad and vague, allowing different interpretations of the same target. Therefore, in order to prompt governments to take immediate and effective actions, countries could internationally agree on several initiatives within a certain time period and hold inoperative countries accountable.
- Another solution to this issue is focusing on the individual group of SDGs. As there are seventeen different categories in the SDGs, this agenda might be too broad to come up with a specific solution that can be applied to every single one of these unique goals; therefore, it is extremely important to prioritize which goals should be achieved and tackled first. It has almost been a decade since this goal has been set, so it is almost impossible to find a solution by generalizing the categories with different progresses. After each nation prioritizes the importance and the significance of the category in terms of the strategic approach of cooperation, nations will be able to collaborate and be aided by aforementioned and other relevant organizations. There are further specifications on how these organizations can contribute to the solutions to these problems in the major party involved segment of this report.
- As many of the different experts state, universal collaboration is the fundamental goal that must be achieved between every nation. There have been countless different conferences to track the nation's progress in the achievement of the SDGs; however, the effectiveness of these agreements has been questioned due to the insignificant changes and unpromising results. Therefore, it is very important to reform such agreements and urge the nations to strengthen their pledges in these agreements. There should be annual conferences on strengthening such agreements after analyzing each nation's progress and status in contribution. As there are limitations to punishing nations that are not effectively contributing, there must be incentives, provided for nations that are willing to strengthen their pledges and make promising impacts. Such incentives will be modified from time to time, depending on the urgent needs of each respective nation. During these conferences and in intergovernmental collaboration, another key factor is developing a universal definition for the term cooperation. As this agenda is not only addressing the issue of achieving the SDGs but is addressing measures to establish cooperation, it is very important to start the first step in addressing this specific issue. Currently, there are no universal definitions present, so establishing

these definitions will allow strengthened policy reforms within the nation and with the progress to utilize and implement this strategy to contribute to the goals.

- Looking at other real-world examples, cooperation between the governments can also help contribute to SDGs. For example, the African Union and China have both imposed the Great Green Wall Initiative to tackle detrimental environmental issues such as scarcity, desertification, and deforestation. The competition between these two nations can be formed to effectively implement different ways to implement this initiative as well as spread the initiative to other places in the globe.

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Appendices

I. <https://www.un-ilibrary.org/content/books/9789210056083/read> (UN SDGs Report 2021)

This report is a good starting point for delegates to understand our current progress with the SDGs. It summarizes all 17 SDGs with detailed statistics, diagrams, and images.

- II. <https://hbr.org/2021/01/the-rules-of-co-opetition> (Harvard Business Review Article)

This article will help delegates formulate a how coopetition helped different types of businesses and parties in the past.

- III. <https://www.businessbecause.com/news/insights/7492/covid-19-vaccine-coopetition> (Article about Coopetition Post-COVID-19)

This article can inform delegates of how coopetition was used to develop the COVID-19 vaccines and how such methods can be applied in the future.