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‘Gender equality, the empowerment of all women and girls and their human rights across the Sustainable Development Goals: Assessing progress towards the implementation of the 2030 Agenda’

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Accelerating the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development: Contributions of the United Nations Human Rights System

Observer paper prepared by:

Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights*

* The views expressed in this publication are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily represent those of UN Women, the United Nations or any of its affiliated organizations.

I. Introduction

Gender equality and the full and equal enjoyment of human rights by all women and girls are both a standalone goal and a cross-cutting prerequisite for achieving the 2030 Agenda. These are not only development priorities but fundamental human rights principles. Integrating human rights across the 2030 Agenda implementation has demonstrated potential to accelerate progress by 2030 and beyond.

It has been demonstrated that when human rights are integrated (i) systematically, (ii) across all dimensions of sustainable development and (iii) with focus on discrimination and inequalities, such efforts advance the rights of women and girls, in particular those who are most marginalized, while also accounting for intersectionality of their lived experience and addressing root causes of deprivation.

Adoption of the 2030 Agenda represented a major achievement – a global agreement on a path towards more just, equitable and sustainable development that pays particular attention to those most marginalized. The 2030 Agenda explicitly affirms that human rights and sustainable development are interrelated and mutually reinforcing, as over 92 per cent of Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) targets are “linked to specific provisions of international human rights instruments”.¹

The shared commitment remains. The importance and centrality of human rights in sustainable development have been reaffirmed at the key global meetings such as the SDG Summits (in 2019 and 2023), the Summit for the Future (2024), the Fourth Financing for Development Conference (2025) and the Second World Summit for Social Development (2025). The 2030 Agenda also builds on the landmark Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action adopted in 1995, and the Beijing+30 Action Agenda (2025) reaffirmed the central importance of achieving gender equality as critical to development, peace and security. Gender equality should be at the heart of the SDGs’ final push as well as deliberation about what comes after 2030.

The efforts to implement the 2030 Agenda have resulted in tangible impacts. Millions of people have gained access to essential services, child and preventable maternal mortality have fallen, and social protection coverage has leapt a 10-percentage point.²

Yet progress has been uneven and insufficient and is increasingly jeopardized. The implementation of the 2030 Agenda is facing major challenges. Rising geopolitical tensions and militarization, more frequent and intense conflicts, multiple planetary crises, economic shocks, surging debt, shrinking civic space and deepening inequalities are amounting to what the Secretary-General has described as a “development emergency”. We need to redouble our efforts to achieve all dimensions of sustainable development firmly grounded in human rights and to ensure that implementation is gender responsive and grounded in human rights.

¹ [Danish Institute for Human Rights](#).

² UN DESA, [The Sustainable Development Goals Report 2025](#).

This observer paper highlights areas where the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) has observed significant developments both from sustainable development and human rights perspectives across the three pillars of the 2030 Agenda.

II. Social dimension of sustainable development

Care and support systems

The COVID-19 pandemic revealed the crucial role of care and support in sustaining the well-being and prosperity of individuals, societies, economies and ecosystems. Since then, there has been a global mobilization for the transformation of care and support systems that advances gender equality and ensures leaving no one behind.

The 2030 Agenda recognizes the importance of recognizing and valuing unpaid care and domestic work through the provision of public services, infrastructure and social protection policies and the promotion of shared responsibility within the household and the family (SDG 5.4).

However, the efforts to address care and support have gone beyond this recognition and expanded to a more comprehensive approach to the transformation of care and support systems grounded in human rights, which

- (i) is linked with a broader range of SDGs, including but not limited to SDGs 1 (no poverty), 2 (zero hunger), 3 (health), 4 (education), 6 (water & sanitation), 8 (decent work), 10 (equality), 11 (inclusive cities and settlements), 13 (climate change), 17 (partnerships);
- (ii) integrates feminist discourse on “care” and disability discourse on “support” and responds to a wider range of rights-holders (women, girls, persons with disabilities, children, youth, older persons, migrants, Indigenous Peoples and minorities, etc.), applying a full set of international human rights standards;
- (iii) protects and promotes human rights in three dimensions of care and support: the rights of those who provide care and support, paid and unpaid; the rights of those who require care and support; and everyone’s rights relevant to self-care;
- (iv) improves the systems through the 5Rs framework and resourcing:
 - (a) Recognizing the value of care and support work and the rights of those providing and requiring care and support;
 - (b) Reducing labour intensive indirect unpaid care and support work, without compromising care and support for those requiring them;
 - (c) Redistributing unpaid care and support work between households and the State, business and community, and between genders;
 - (d) Rewarding paid care and support workers;
 - (e) Ensuring the representation and participation of those providing and requiring care and support and their organizations; and

- (f) The cross-cutting policy outcome on resourcing for comprehensive care and support systems.

Progress made

Increased political commitments at global and regional levels

Since 2023, political commitments by States for establishing comprehensive care and support systems that are gender-, disability-, and age-responsive and with full respect for human rights have been generated and repeatedly confirmed. Many of these resolutions recognize the need to realize the rights of both those who provide and require care and support, and the rights relevant to self-care.

(i) 2026

- (a) Human Rights Council resolution on “elimination of all forms of discrimination against women and girls in care and support systems”, [A/HRC/62/13](#), July 2026
- (b) Human Rights Council resolution on “the rights of persons with disabilities: disability-inclusive digital technologies and infrastructure, including transport and housing”, [A/HRC/RES/61/9](#), March 2026

(ii) 2025

- (a) General Assembly resolution on “Contribution of the care economy to sustainable development”, [A/RES/80/152](#), November 2025
- (b) Doha Political Declaration of the “World Social Summit” under the title “the Second World Summit for Social Development”, [A/RES/80/5](#), November 2025
- (c) Sevilla Commitment, [A/CONF.227/2025/L.1](#), June 2025
- (d) World Health Assembly resolution on “Accelerating action on the global health and care workforce by 2030”, [WHA78.16](#), May 2025
- (e) Commission on the Status of Women, Political declaration on the occasion of the thirtieth anniversary of the Fourth World Conference on Women, [E/CN.6/2025/L.1](#), March 2025

(iii) 2024

- (a) The Pact for the Future, [A/RES/79/1](#), September 2024
- (b) ECOSOC resolution on “Promoting care and support systems for social development”, [E/RES/2024/4](#), July 2024
- (c) International Labour Conference resolution “concerning decent work and the care economy”, [ILC.112/resolution III](#), June 2024
- (d) Human Rights Council resolution on “Support systems to ensure community inclusion of persons with disabilities”, [A/HRC/RES/55/8](#), April 2024

- (e) Commission on the Status of Women, CSW68 Agreed Conclusions, [E/CN.6/2024/L.3](#), March 2024
- (iv) **2023**
 - (a) Human Rights Council resolution on “Centrality of care and support from a human rights perspective”, [A/HRC/54/6](#), October 2023
 - (b) General Assembly Resolution on “International Day of Care and Support”, [A/RES/77/317](#), August 2023

Normative and policy development at regional level

At the regional level, the Inter-American Commission of Women of the Organization of American States adopted the Inter-American Model Law on Care in 2022. The member States of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean adopted the Buenos Aires Commitment in 2022 and the Tlatelolco Commitment in which care was recognized as “a right to provide and receive care and to exercise self-care”. The Association of Southeast Asian Nations adopted a Comprehensive Framework on the Care Economy in 2021, and the European Commission adopted the European Care Strategy in 2022.³ In 2025, the European Union and 17 countries of Latin America and the Caribbean the Bi-regional Pact on Care, a cross-regional collaboration to strengthen care systems.⁴

In 2025, Inter-American Court of Human Rights adopted the [Advisory Opinion OC-31/25](#), on “The content and scope of the right to care and its interrelationship with other rights” in which the Court recognized a right to care as a standalone human right and clarified corresponding State obligations.

Changes at national level

Several countries have recognized a “human right to care” as a legal right⁵ and/or adopted national policies to promote it. Chile, Ecuador, Uruguay have adopted laws that establish national care systems.⁶

Local governments are also leading on the creation of comprehensive care and support systems. For example, in Bogotá, the Manzanas del Cuidado programme initiated in 2020 provides community-based care and support services to reduce and redistribute unpaid care and support work and to promote community integration. In 2024, the State of Jalisco, Mexico, adopted a law for a comprehensive care system.⁷

³ [A/HRC/58/43](#) and [Tlatelolco Commitment: A Decade of Action to Achieve Substantive Gender Equality and the Care Society | XVI Regional Conference on Women in Latin America and the Caribbean](#).

⁴ [Press Statement: EU–LAC Bi-regional Pact on Care | EEAS](#).

⁵ For example, [Brazil](#), [Chile](#), [Ecuador](#), [Uruguay](#). The Supreme Court of Mexico also recognized the right to care.

⁶ For example, [Brazil](#), [Chile](#), [Colombia](#), [Ecuador](#), [Kenya](#), [Paraguay](#), [Uruguay](#). Mexico’s [Plan Nacional de Desarrollo 2025-2030](#) places care as its centre.

⁷ [A/HRC/58/43](#).

Catalytical role of the Sustainable Development Goals

The current sustainable development framework already includes the indicator on women and girls' unpaid care work (SDG 5.4). In addition, the attainment of a wide range of SDGs, across the three pillars of sustainable development (social, economic and environmental pillars) will contribute to building gender-, disability- and age-responsive care and support systems that is essential for advancing gender equality, and responding to the rights of women and girls, in particular those who face multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination.

Contributions of the United Nations system and its human rights mechanisms

In 2024, the United Nations system issued its system-wide policy paper “[Transforming Care Systems](#)”. It proposed a common approach across the United Nations system to support States to transform care and support systems.

Among the work conducted by the various United Nations entities, in 2025, OHCHR presented a thematic report on human rights dimension of care and support ([A/HRC/58/43](#)) to the Human Rights Council. This report compiled and analyzed the existing human rights standards relevant to care and support. In 2023, the thematic report on support systems enabling community inclusion of persons with disabilities ([A/HRC/55/34](#)), presented to the Council compiled good practices on support systems for persons with disabilities.

OHCHR has developed tools to integrate the rights of persons with disabilities into care and support systems, including: [Disability Care and Support Systems: Country Assessment Tool](#); [Equality and Quality in Disability-Inclusive Human Support Provision \(EQUIP\)](#); and [Disability Care and Support Systems: Training Package](#) (Advance Version).

These tools also aimed to bring together feminist and disability approaches on care and support.

United Nations human rights mechanisms have issued several thematic reports with analysis and recommendations on care and support systems, namely:

- (i) Former Special Rapporteur on extreme poverty's initiative on “A Roadmap for Eradicating Poverty Beyond Growth” includes policy guidance on [Labour policies and the care economy](#) (2026)
- (ii) Working Group on Discrimination against Women and Girls, a report on “Gendered dimensions of care and support systems”, [A/HRC/59/45](#), May 2025
- (iii) Special Rapporteur on the rights of persons with disabilities, a report on “Care and support for children with disabilities within the family environment and its gendered dimensions”, [A/80/170](#), July 2025
- (iv) Special Rapporteur on discrimination against persons with leprosy (Hansen's disease), a report on “Care and support for persons affected by leprosy (Hansen's disease) and their family members from a human rights perspective”, [A/79/152](#), July 2024

The country visits by the Working Group on Discrimination against Women and Girls and the Special Rapporteur on the rights of persons with disabilities analyzed and provided

recommendations on gender equality and unpaid care, as well as support systems for persons with disabilities (e.g. Armenia,⁸ Zimbabwe,⁹ Thailand,¹⁰ Dominican Republic,¹¹ Colombia¹² and Kyrgyzstan¹³).

The United Nations human rights treaty bodies, including the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), the Committee on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (CESCR), issued recommendations to improve or establish national care and support systems (e.g. Mexico,¹⁴ Uruguay,¹⁵ Costa Rica,¹⁶ Peru,¹⁷ Ecuador,¹⁸ Kyrgyzstan,¹⁹ Kenya,²⁰ Colombia,²¹ Croatia,²² Brazil,²³ Portugal,²⁴ Bolivia (Plurinational State of),²⁵ United Kingdom,²⁶ Netherlands²⁷ and Afghanistan²⁸).

Between 2009 and 2026, States have accepted recommendations issued by the Human Rights Council's Universal Periodic Review on national care systems, including long-term care and alternative care for children, in relation to SDGs 3, 5, 8, 10 and 16 (e.g. Marchal Islands,²⁹ Mongolia,³⁰ Panama,³¹ Chile,³² China,³³ Russian Federation,³⁴ Denmark,³⁵ Mozambique,³⁶

⁸ Country visit by WG DAWG, 2026, the report is forthcoming.

⁹ WG DAWG, 2025, [A/HRC/62/48/Add.1](#).

¹⁰ WG DAWG, 2024, [A/HRC/59/45/Add.2](#).

¹¹ WG DAWG, 2024, [A/HRC/59/45/Add.1](#).

¹² SR disability, 2025, [A/HRC/61/46/ADD.1](#).

¹³ SR disability, 2024, [A/HRC/58/56/Add.1](#).

¹⁴ [CEDAW/C/MEX/CO/10 \(CEDAW 2025\)](#).

¹⁵ [CEDAW/C/URY/CO/10 \(CEDAW 2023\)](#), [CEDAW/C/URY/CO/10 \(CEDAW 2023\)](#), [CRC/C/URY/CO/3-5 \(CRC 2015\)](#).

¹⁶ [CEDAW/C/CRI/CO/8 \(CEDAW 2023\)](#).

¹⁷ [CEDAW/C/PER/CO/9 \(CEDAW 2022\)](#).

¹⁸ [CEDAW/C/ECU/CO/10 \(CEDAW 2021\)](#).

¹⁹ [CEDAW/C/KGZ/CO/5 \(CEDAW 2021\)](#).

²⁰ [E/C.12/KEN/CO/6 \(CESCR 2026\)](#).

²¹ [CRC/C/COL/CO/6-7 \(CRC 2026\)](#), [E/C.12/COL/CO/7 \(CESCR 2025\)](#).

²² [E/C.12/HRV/CO/2 \(CESCR 2025\)](#), [CRC/C/HRV/CO/3-4 \(CRC 2014\)](#).

²³ [E/C.12/BRA/CO/3 \(CESCR 2023\)](#).

²⁴ [CRC/C/PRT/CO/3-4 \(CRC 2014\)](#); [E/C.12/PRT/CO/5 \(CESCR 2023\)](#).

²⁵ [E/C.12/BOL/CO/3 \(CESCR 2021\)](#).

²⁶ [E/C.12/GBR/CO/7 \(CESCR 2025\)](#), [E/C.12/GBR/CO/7 \(CESCR 2025\)](#).

²⁷ [E/C.12/NLD/CO/7 \(CESCR 2025\)](#).

²⁸ [CEDAW/C/AFG/CO/4 \(CEDAW 2025\)](#).

²⁹ [A/HRC/61/14 \(UPR 2026\)](#).

³⁰ [A/HRC/61/7 \(UPR 2026\)](#).

³¹ [A/HRC/61/8 \(UPR 2026\)](#).

³² [A/HRC/57/6 \(UPR 2024\)](#).

³³ [A/HRC/56/6 \(UPR 2024\)](#).

³⁴ [A/HRC/55/14 \(UPR 2023\)](#).

³⁵ [A/HRC/48/10 \(UPR 2021\)](#).

³⁶ [A/HRC/48/6 \(UPR 2021\)](#).

Kenya,³⁷ Poland,³⁸ Greece,³⁹ Guatemala,⁴⁰ Azerbaijan,⁴¹ Panama,⁴² San Marino,⁴³ Albania⁴⁴ and Cabo Verde⁴⁵) to improve care and support systems for persons with disabilities in relation to SDGs 1, 4, 10 and 16 (e.g. Belarus,⁴⁶ Costa Rica,⁴⁷ New Zealand,⁴⁸ Uzbekistan,⁴⁹ Poland,⁵⁰ Republic of Korea⁵¹ and Moldova⁵²).

Remaining challenges

Challenges identified include the gap in legal protection; a lack of sufficient investment and sustainable financing; gaps in supply and demand for care and support workforce; insufficient participation of rights holders in decision-making; the inadequate capacity of service providers and their workers to deliver human rights-based care and support services; the absence of effective accountability mechanisms; a lack of disaggregated data capturing the rights and needs of both those providing and those requiring care and support, and the multiple and intersectional forms of discrimination they face; insufficient responses to the compounded impact of crises, arising from growing economic inequalities, armed conflicts and climate-related and health emergencies; and gaps relating to global care chains, including widening care and support deficits in the countries of origin of migrant care and support workers and the privatization of care and support services without corresponding human rights safeguards.⁵³

Sexual and reproductive health and rights

The realization of sexual and reproductive health and rights for gender equality and women and girls' enjoyment of human rights remains one of the biggest gaps in attaining sustainable development and human rights.

Preventable maternal mortality and morbidity

There is growing recognition of preventable maternal mortality and morbidity as a human rights issue, with initiatives targeting the root causes through legal reform, stronger health systems and greater inclusion of marginalized populations. There has been genuine progress in reducing maternal mortality rates – even in precarious settings – by, for instance, improving rural healthcare access. These successful strategies can be shared and adapted to various contexts.

³⁷ [A/HRC/44/9 \(UPR 2020\)](#).

³⁸ [A/HRC/36/14 \(UPR 2017\)](#).

³⁹ [A/HRC/33/7 \(UPR 2016\)](#).

⁴⁰ [A/HRC/22/8 \(UPR 2012\)](#).

⁴¹ [A/HRC/11/20 \(UPR 2009\)](#).

⁴² [A/HRC/61/8 \(UPR 2026\)](#).

⁴³ [A/HRC/59/9 \(UPR 2025\)](#).

⁴⁴ [A/HRC/58/5 \(UPR 2024\)](#).

⁴⁵ [A/HRC/55/6 \(UPR 2023\)](#).

⁴⁶ [A/HRC/61/4 \(UPR 2026\)](#).

⁴⁷ [A/HRC/58/13 \(UPR 2024\)](#).

⁴⁸ [A/HRC/57/4 \(UPR 2024\)](#).

⁴⁹ [A/HRC/39/7 \(UPR 2018\)](#).

⁵⁰ [A/HRC/36/14 \(UPR 2017\)](#).

⁵¹ [A/HRC/53/11 \(UPR 2023\)](#).

⁵² [A/HRC/19/18 \(UPR 2011\)](#).

⁵³ [A/HRC/58/43](#).

Yet preventable maternal mortality remains the deadliest expression of gender-based discrimination in some parts of the world. A woman dies approximately every two minutes from preventable causes related to pregnancy and childbirth. The advances made remain uneven amid persistent gender and other socioeconomic inequalities, fragile health infrastructure, and frequent political inertia towards reducing preventable maternal mortality and morbidity, in a global environment of growing hostility towards gender equality at large. Economic instability, conflict and environmental deterioration have exacerbated systemic failures that disproportionately harm women and girls.

Eliminating preventable maternal mortality and morbidity requires States investing in universal healthcare, including maternal healthcare, in access for girls to quality education, in genuine accountability measures, including transparent data systems.

Maternal survival is a matter of justice, not just healthcare, and only a rights-based overhaul will ensure that no woman or girl dies from preventable causes. Eradicating preventable maternal mortality and morbidity is not optional: it is a moral and human rights imperative involving clear legal obligations of States.⁵⁴

Adolescent pregnancy

Adolescent pregnancy remains a complex global challenge, deeply rooted in structural inequalities, including restricted access to sexual and reproductive health services and information. It is both a cause and a consequence of human rights violations, disproportionately affecting marginalized girls. Millions of girls become pregnant and give birth each year before they are physically, emotionally or socially prepared to do so, predominantly in low- and middle-income countries.

The consequences for adolescent girls' health and lives are severe, with long-term socioeconomic disadvantages perpetuating cycles of poverty and discrimination. Underreporting of adolescent pregnancies, limited disaggregated data, limited institutional capacity, the politicization of adolescent sexual and reproductive health, persistent underfunding of sexual and reproductive health services and the absence of effective and confidential complaint mechanisms, all hinder the ability to respond effectively to the needs of adolescents. Criminalization of consensual sexual activity between adolescents of similar ages and abortion care continue to undermine prevention efforts.

Effectively addressing adolescent pregnancy should become a priority for all, which might in some situations mean treating it as a national emergency. It requires States to comply with their human rights obligations to respect, protect and fulfil the right to sexual and reproductive health of all adolescents, moving beyond siloed approaches towards sustainable, coordinated, evidence-based action. As some participants in OHCHR consultations said: "A girl child should never have to bear and raise another child."⁵⁵

⁵⁴ [A/HRC/62/62: Accelerating progress towards preventing pregnancy among adolescent girls - Report of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights - Advance edited version | OHCHR.](#)

⁵⁵ [A/HRC/62/62: Accelerating progress towards preventing pregnancy among adolescent girls - Report of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights - Advance edited version | OHCHR.](#)

Contributions of the United Nations system and its human rights mechanisms

Mandated by the Human Rights Council, OHCHR presented at the Council:

- (i) An update to the technical guidance on the application of a human rights-based approach to the elimination of preventable maternal mortality and morbidity, [A/HRC/60/43](#), 2025
- (ii) A report on Accelerating progress towards preventing pregnancy among adolescent girls, [A/HRC/62/62](#), 2026

On preventable maternal mortality and morbidity, the report documented that over recent decades, States across all regions have pursued efforts to reshape their sexual and reproductive health landscapes, including maternal health, to address the needs of the most marginalized populations. Although political, economic and cultural settings differ, the reforms undertaken tend to fall into five mutually reinforcing strands: legal, service-related, informational, structural and intersectional. National experiences have shown that resolute political will is an essential precondition in reducing maternal mortality and morbidity even in the most precarious socioeconomic contexts.⁵⁶

Recognizing that sustained progress can be achieved only by addressing the deeper social and economic inequalities that put some women at a greater risk of dying, a growing number of States from various regions have introduced the following measures: (i) universal health coverage to guarantee access to maternal health services through publicly-funded programmes; (ii) decentralized care models, which integrate primary care with higher-level services; and (iii) expanded infrastructure and emergency transport systems, which are crucial for bridging geographical disparities. Some States are recognizing that reaching all women requires legal protections and service improvements established through an intersectional lens. Some countries are adopting anti-discrimination guidelines, training health workers on adequate and respectful maternal care and disability inclusion, while more attention is being paid to the needs of people who have historically been and continue to be discriminated against.⁵⁷

On adolescent pregnancy, the promising practices demonstrate that adolescent pregnancy is preventable when addressed through multi-sectoral, rights-based approaches that combine access to quality education, including comprehensive sexuality education, accessible and adolescent-friendly health services, community engagement, adolescent empowerment, and targeted social protection. Laws and policies proven effective in supporting the reduction of adolescent pregnancy include those that eliminate child marriage; establish adequate protection mechanisms for child victims of sexual violence; guarantee access to confidential and youth friendly information and services without third party consent; subsidize contraceptives; decriminalize abortion care and consensual close in age sexual conduct; and ensure adolescent participation in the development of laws, policies and programmes affecting them. These successful models underscore the need for

⁵⁶ [A/HRC/60/43](#).

⁵⁷ Ibid.

sustained political commitment, adequate financing and the meaningful participation of adolescents.

Catalytical role of the Sustainable Development Goals

Preventing adolescent pregnancy is a key element of the SDGs, including indicator 3.7.2.

III. Economic dimension of sustainable development

Human rights economy

In April 2023, [the High Commissioner formally launched his vision of a human rights economy](#) in New York at the 75th Anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Human rights economy is a basis for sustainable development.

A human rights economy centres people and the planet in economic, social, and environmental policies, plans and programmes and aims at ensuring that all economic, industrial and trade policies, investment decisions, consumer protections and choices, as well as business models, are firmly guided by human rights norms and standards.

It intentionally means eliminating discrimination, empowering those left behind and reducing inequalities by investing in rights (i.e. economic, social, [to a healthy environment](#), [to development](#), and others), and dismantling structural barriers and impediments to equality, justice, sustainable growth and shared prosperity.

At the national level, a human rights economy can be pursued through a variety of pathways, including:

- (i) Allocating the maximum of resources through budgets and taxation to meet the State's commitment to health care, social protections, quality education, clean water, housing and other fundamental rights.
- (ii) Protecting the fiscal space for human rights for countries in situation of debt distress.
- (iii) Investing in care and support systems anchored in human rights.
- (iv) Enshrining human rights at the core of trade agreements so that they offer significant opportunities to accelerate inclusive and sustainable development and growth for all.
- (v) Reconciling economic growth with climate and environmental action and developing new metrics that measure economic success beyond gross domestic product.

Ensuring transparency and accountability principles and fostering participation and empowering those left behind are vital enablers for all the pathways mentioned above.

Building human rights economies at the national level will also require transforming the international financial architecture and global economic governance in what the UN Secretary-General has called “a giant leap towards global justice.”

In particular, it means:

- (i) Reforming the global debt architecture to make it fairer so that it proactively supports implementation of human rights and SDGs.
- (ii) Reforming the mandates of the international financial institutions so that they align their operations and conditionalities with States’ existing human rights obligations.
- (iii) Shifting towards more inclusive and effective international tax cooperation to combat tax avoidance and evasion and substantially increase the capacity of countries to mobilize domestic resources to invest in human rights and SDGs.⁵⁸

Progress made

States have acknowledged the importance of integration of human rights in economic policies, including:

- (i) Human Rights Council resolution [A/HRC/RES/53/28](#), in 2023, which – together with resolutions [52/14](#) and [54/22](#) – increased United Nations Human Rights resources to fight poverty and address inequalities, to integrate human rights in the realization of the 2030 Agenda, and to advance economic, social and cultural rights, respectively.
- (ii) In 2025, Human Rights Council resolution [A/HRC/RES/58/9](#) underscored the importance of “designing and implementing economic policies that advance the realization of human rights for all”, as well as the joint statement delivered by [Honduras](#) (on behalf of [Bahamas](#), [Bahrain](#), [Bolivia \(Plurinational State of\)](#), [Chile](#), [Maldives](#), [Mongolia](#), [Panama](#), [Spain](#)) showing support for the human rights economy and the work of the Office.
- (iii) In 2026, the renewed Human Rights Council resolution on Human Rights and the 2030 Agenda ([A/HRC/RES/61/28](#)) introduced an explicit reference to the human rights economy, reflecting sustained and increasing recognition of the concept.

Technical support has been provided by OHCHR to several States to advance human rights economy with focus on gender equality.

- (i) In South Africa, OHCHR supported a human rights-based, gender-responsive initiative for informal workers, especially migrant women in domestic and farm work. Consultations documented barriers to decent work and social

⁵⁸ [Human rights economy – Seeding change for an economy that enhances human rights | OHCHR](#).

protection, informing national policy dialogue to strengthen labour rights, inclusive protections, accountability and economic justice.

- (ii) In the United Republic of Tanzania, OHCHR and the International Labour Organization (ILO) trained 25 mostly women domestic workers on labour rights, safety, and preventing violence, creating peer leaders. OHCHR also trained 58 mediators, arbitrators and labour officers to resolve domestic worker disputes using rights-compliant, gender-responsive approaches, strengthening protection mechanisms and labour governance.
- (iii) In Ethiopia, OHCHR advanced the rights of domestic workers, most of whom are women, by identifying labour and social protection gaps and creating spaces for rights holders to shape reform priorities. Its legal and policy analysis informed a workshop with domestic workers from multiple regions, followed by a national policy dialogue with government, parliamentarians, unions, civil society and United Nations partners. Domestic workers' testimonies helped secure commitments from Parliament and the Ministry of Labour to pursue reforms aligned with the ILO Domestic Workers Convention, generating an action plan and elevating domestic workers' rights in national and United Nations agendas.
- (iv) In Tunisia, OHCHR supported gender-responsive labour protections for women in Monastir's textile sector by generating evidence with civil society, training workers on labour rights, and convening government, employers, unions, civil society and donors to validate recommendations and agree on actions to improve working conditions and sustainable production.
- (v) Chile has made significant progress in institutionalizing gender-responsive budgeting within public financial management. Since the early 2000s, it has integrated gender equality objectives into budget planning and service delivery through the Programa de Mejoramiento de la Gestión, supported by the Ministry of Finance and national gender machinery. More recently, Chile developed a structured [Presupuesto con Perspectiva de Género](#), applying gender analysis throughout the budget cycle and using gender tagging to track equality-related expenditure. Analysis of the 2025 Budget Law found that 22.5 per cent of public expenditure advances gender equality. The Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, UN Women and OHCHR provided technical assistance.

Contributions of the United Nations system and its human rights mechanisms

In November 2024, ILO and OHCHR Principals reaffirmed their commitment to deepening collaboration on a wide range of socio-economic and business-related issues. In particular, human rights economy was identified as a key pathway to promoting social justice, through the realization of labour rights and social protection, under the shared vision of the [Global Coalition for Social Justice \(GCSJ\)](#). Following a dialogue held in November 2024, OHCHR and the ILO Principals agreed on a joint framework on the human rights economy, offering a clear value proposition for

tripartite constituents. This framework was presented to social partners on the [World Day of Social Justice](#) and later at the [annual GCSJ Forum on 12 June 2025](#).

The Working Group on discrimination against women and girls in its 2023 report on gendered inequalities of poverty ([A/HRC/53/39](#)) underscored the need to apply a feminist and human rights-based approach to poverty and inequality, based on the assertion that the role of the economy is to support human dignity, well-being and human rights, to reduce socioeconomic inequalities. The Working Group underscored the importance of fully implementing redistributive and solidarity obligations under human rights instruments and encouraged States and international organizations to adopt human rights-based and feminist approaches to advance sustainable, feminist and human rights-based economies through progressive and redistributive global financial governance frameworks, providing detailed recommendations in this regard.⁵⁹

In 2025, the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights adopted a Statement on Tax Policy and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights ([E/C.12/2025/1](#)), calling on States to design and implement tax policies that promote substantive equality and eliminate gender bias, avoid regressive taxation, support a more equitable distribution of unpaid work and women's participation in the labour market, and generate fiscal space through equitable and progressive taxation for investment in gender-, disability- and age-responsive public services, including comprehensive care and support systems.⁶⁰

IV. Environmental dimension of sustainable development

Right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment

A clean, healthy and sustainable environment – recognized by Human Rights Council resolution [48/13](#) and General Assembly resolution [76/300](#) – is essential for the realization of the SDGs. It is directly linked to SDGs 6, 7, 11, 12, 13, 14 and 15 and underpins the realization of all the other goals. The right to a healthy environment is an enabler of SDG 5 on gender equality insofar as it is intrinsic for the realization of women's ownership and control over land and natural resources.

Contributions of the United Nations system and its human rights mechanisms

Efforts to integrate women's rights and gender equality in environmental action include:

- (i) CEDAW [General Recommendation No. 37](#) (2018) which highlights that women are disproportionately impacted by climate-induced disasters
- (ii) CEDAW [General Recommendation No. 39](#) (2022) that underscores how anthropogenic pollution, contamination, deforestation, burning of fossil fuels and loss of biodiversity threaten Indigenous women' and girls' right to a healthy environment

⁵⁹ [A/HRC/53/39: Gendered inequalities of poverty: feminist and human rights-based approaches | OHCHR.](#)

⁶⁰ [E/C.12/2025/1: Committee adopts Statement on Tax Policy and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights | OHCHR.](#)

- (iii) Special Rapporteur on human rights and the environment issued a report on women, girls and the right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment ([A/HRC/52/33](#)), 2023
- (iv) OHCHR Report on the impact of climate change on the equal enjoyment of the right to education by every girl ([A/HRC/57/37](#))

The gender action plans of the three Rio conventions (Framework Convention on Climate Change [UNFCCC], Convention on Biological Diversity [UNCBD] and Convention to Combat Desertification [UNCCD]) include calls for human rights-based approaches for sustainable environmental action:

- (i) The UNCBD [Gender Plan of Action](#) calls for a human rights-based approach to advancing gender equality in the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity and the fair and equitable sharing of benefits arising out of the utilization of genetic resources.
- (ii) The UNFCCC [Belém Gender Action Plan](#) acknowledges that differentiated impacts of climate change and opportunities for women and girls, including Indigenous women, women from local communities, migrant women, women with disabilities, women smallholder farmers and women from rural and remote communities, are shaped by multidimensional factors, and recognizes the contribution of women and girls of African descent to climate action.
- (iii) The UNCCD [Gender Action Plan](#) emphasizes the importance of Indigenous and rural women in its implementation and calls for addressing care and support as a priority issue for gender-responsive implementation.

Human rights, gender equality and sustainable development are increasingly reflected across multilateral environmental agreements and in the outcomes of decision-making bodies:

- (i) [Target 23](#) of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework calls for gender equality and a gender-responsive approach to the implementation of the Framework.
- (ii) United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA) adopted resolution 4/17 on promoting gender equality and the human rights and empowerment of women and girls in environmental governance.
- (iii) The Commission on the Status of Women's agreed conclusions from its 66th session to achieve gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls in the context of climate change, environmental and disaster risk reduction policies and programmes.

OHCHR issued the following analysis relevant to the issue:

- (i) Analytical study on gender-responsive climate action for the full and effective enjoyment of the rights of women ([A/HRC/41/26](#)), 2019

- (ii) [Key Messages on Human Rights, the Environment and Gender Equality](#) with the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and UN Women

V. Conclusions and recommendations

For the successful implementation of the 2030 Agenda, human rights need to be a non-negotiable, systematic element of every policy decision, budget allocation, and data collection effort tied to the 2030 Agenda. Gender equality and the full and equal enjoyment of human rights by all women and girls must be systematically integrated across all three pillars of the 2030 Agenda, not only as development priorities but also as fundamental human rights principles.

General recommendations

- (i) Close the gap between human rights and sustainable development implementation. Prioritize efforts aimed at achieving gender equality and building human rights economies.
- (ii) Address structural causes of gender inequality across all the three pillars of SDGs.
- (iii) Increase resources for tailored technical advice on human rights and sustainable development, especially at the regional and national level.
- (iv) Prioritize aligning national development plans and strategies with human rights obligations.
- (v) Systematically utilize the work of the international human rights mechanisms to inform national and local development efforts.
- (vi) Commit to systematic human rights-based gender and leave no one behind analyses that identify marginalized population, with their gendered experiences; determine the most excluded among them; examine the structural causes of their marginalization; and define priority action needed to address them, applying a life-course and gender-, disability- and age-responsive approach.
- (vii) Strengthen the collection and analysis of data disaggregated by gender/sex and other grounds, invest in data systems that align with international human rights law and systematically apply human rights standards to measure SDG progress, in particular for those most left behind.
- (viii) Accelerate SDG progress, address extreme poverty and inequality, and promote a just transition by building human rights-based economies that use international human rights law to guide economic policymaking.
- (ix) Systematically connect human rights bodies – such as national human rights institutions and national mechanisms for implementation, reporting and follow-up – with the national institutions responsible for SDG implementation.

- (x) Systematically conduct human rights, gender and equality impact assessments, along with human rights-based analyses of public spending, taxation and budgeting.
- (xi) Ensure that the obligation to use the maximum available resources to realize economic, social and cultural rights guide the design of budgets and economic policies.
- (xii) Prioritize efforts to establish universal, adequate, predictable and non-discriminatory social security systems that focus on marginalized populations and to build comprehensive, rights-based care and support systems.
- (xiii) Prioritize a just transition and ensure that the right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment is fully integrated into the implementation of the SDGs.
- (xiv) Enhance access to justice, including for economic, social and cultural rights; institutionalize access to information; build transparent and accountable institutions; safeguard and expand civic space; and ensure meaningful participation of all stakeholders in development efforts.
- (xv) Embed human rights in reforms of the international finance, tax and debt architectures, including the structural governance and operations of international financial institutions, private creditors and credit rating agencies.

Recommendations specific to the issues highlighted in this observer paper can be found in the following documents.

Care and support

- (i) Human Rights Council resolution on “elimination of all forms of discrimination against women and girls in care and support systems”, A/HRC/62/L.16/Rev.1, July 2026
- (ii) Human Rights Council resolution on “Support systems to ensure community inclusion of persons with disabilities”, [A/HRC/RES/55/8](#), April 2024
- (iii) Human Rights Council resolution on “Centrality of care and support from a human rights perspective”, [A/HRC/54/6](#), October 2023
- (iv) [A/HRC/58/43: Human rights dimension of care and support - Report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights | OHCHR, 2025](#)

Sexual and reproductive health and rights

- (i) Human Rights Council resolution on “Preventable maternal mortality and morbidity and human rights”, [A/HRC/RES/54/16](#), October 2023
- (ii) [A/HRC/60/43: Update to the technical guidance on the application of a human rights-based approach to the elimination of preventable maternal mortality and morbidity | OHCHR](#)

- (iii) [A/HRC/RES/56/21](#): Accelerating progress towards preventing adolescent girls' pregnancy, July 2024
- (iv) [A/HRC/62/62: Accelerating progress towards preventing pregnancy among adolescent girls - Report of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights - Advance edited version](#), 2026

Human rights economy

- (i) Working Group on Discrimination against Women and Girls, [A/HRC/53/39: Gendered inequalities of poverty: feminist and human rights-based approaches | OHCHR](#)
- (ii) [A/HRC/62/42/Add.2: The Roadmap for Eradicating Poverty Beyond Growth - Report of the Special Rapporteur on extreme poverty and human rights | OHCHR](#)
- (iii) CESCR Statement on Tax Policy and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights ([E/C.12/2025/1](#))

Right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment

- (i) CEDAW [General Recommendation No. 37](#) (2018)
- (ii) CEDAW [General Recommendation No. 39](#) (2022)
- (iii) Inter-agency publication on [Human Rights, Environment and Gender Equality](#), 2022
- (iv) Special Rapporteur on human rights and the environment: report on Women, girls and the right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment, [A/HRC/52/33](#), 2023
- (v) Analytical study on gender-responsive climate action, [A/HRC/41/26](#), 2019