Leaving No One Behind:
Equality and Non-Discrimination at the Heart of Sustainable Development

A Shared United Nations System Framework for Action

United Nations System
Chief Executives Board for Coordination

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The United Nations System Shared Framework for Action

In April 2016, the members of the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination (CEB) committed to put the imperative to eliminate discrimination and reduce inequalities within and among countries at the heart of the United Nations system's efforts to support Member States in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

This publication opens with this CEB statement and then sets out a whole-of-system Shared Framework for Action, which was endorsed by the CEB in November 2016. The Shared Framework aims to establish a common understanding of the challenge of rising inequalities and pervasive discrimination and to put forward a common programme for action. The Framework specifies elements of a comprehensive and coherent package of policy and programme support at the national, regional and global levels; promotes a common, system-wide approach to the analysis and monitoring of inequalities and discrimination, and their root causes; and identifies ways to strengthen accountability measures. Once implemented, the Framework will support the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in a way that leaves no one behind.

This Shared Framework for Action provides guidance to United Nations system organizations, their staff and other interested stakeholders who are driven to strive for a more equal world and to fulfil the obligation under the United Nations Charter to promote and encourage respect for human rights, including the principle of equality and non-discrimination for all people.

Both the statement and the Framework were produced by the High-level Committee on Programmes (HLCP), under the leadership of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) and the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women), through a time-bound HLCP working group established as an inter-agency Consultative Group on Inequalities. As part of the exercise, all HLCP member entities were invited to highlight ways in which they were contributing to combatting inequalities and discrimination, individually and in partnership with others. These contributions are available on the CEB website, along with other material related to the Shared Framework, at *www.unsceb.org/content/shared-framework-for-action-on-equality.*

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Foreword by the Secretary-General, Chair of the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination

In recent decades, the economy has expanded globally, social indicators have improved for many, and the proportion of people living in absolute poverty has fallen. Yet we have also seen a dramatic rise in inequalities within and between countries, and the concentration of wealth and power in fewer and fewer hands. Many people, particularly the poorest and most marginalized, are being excluded from development and falling farther and farther behind. This only breeds frustration and mistrust, and undermines progress and peace.

Rising inequalities and pervasive discrimination are not inevitable. Rather, they are the result of decades of policies and dynamics that have undercut equality and rolled back efforts to build better lives for all. This contradicts the very purposes and principles of the United Nations, as enshrined in the Charter's commitment to "equal rights", "better standards of life" and the "economic and social advancement of all peoples". The United Nations system is therefore duty-bound to combat these trends.

The transformative 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, including its Sustainable Development Goals, offers fresh hope, setting out a new paradigm for more inclusive and sustainable development to ensure freedom from fear and want for all people, without discrimination. If that hope is to be realized, all stakeholders must act urgently in a whole-of-society effort to implement the new Agenda, working in partnership to address the root causes of conflict and deprivation — including

discrimination, marginalization, exclusion and other human rights abuses — and to halt and reverse the deepening divisions in our societies.

It was with this vision in mind that the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination committed to put equality and non-discrimination at the heart of the United Nations system's support to the Sustainable Development Goals. Indeed, inclusive and sustainable development is the best way to prevent conflict and crisis and to generate equitable progress for all people, everywhere.

I count on all United Nations system entities to embrace this Framework for Action and to work with Member States, communities, and our partners in civil society and the private sector to fulfil the promise to build more peaceful, resilient and just societies and to ensure that no one, anywhere, is left behind.

António Guterres
Secretary-General of the United Nations

United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination Statement of Commitment

Putting the imperative to combat inequalities and discrimination at the forefront of United Nations efforts to support implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

Endorsed 27 April 2016

Development must be more equitable if it is to be sustainable.

Deepening, divisive and destabilising inequalities within and among countries are threatening social progress and economic and political stability, affecting all pillars of the United Nations' work, including development, human rights and peace and security. If inequalities continue to widen, development may not be sustainable.[1]

At the United Nations Sustainable Development Summit 2015, held on 25-27 September 2015, in New York, Member States adopted the post-2015 global development agenda, entitled "Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development" (General Assembly resolution 70/1). The 2030 Agenda is a universal, transformative and people-centred plan of action, strongly grounded in international human rights law that aims to collectively work towards achieving sustainable development through cooperation and integrating the social, economic and environmental dimensions of development.

In the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, Member States have recognised that "rising inequalities within and among countries" and "enormous disparities of opportunity, wealth and power" as well as persistent "gender inequality" are "immense challenges" confronting the world today. In response, and building on the lessons of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), the 2030 Agenda puts at its heart the commitments to leave no one behind and to reach the furthest behind first. It aims not only to end poverty and hunger, but also "to combat inequalities within and

among countries; to build peaceful, just and inclusive societies; [and] to protect human rights and promote gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls" and "to ensure that all human beings can fulfil their potential in dignity and equality and in a healthy environment".

Member States have committed in the 2030 Agenda to achieving more inclusive economies and societies where "wealth is shared and income inequality addressed" and where gender equality is achieved and all forms of discrimination are eliminated. So central is the challenge of inequality to the 2030 Agenda that two of its 17 goals are dedicated entirely to this objective, Goal 5 on ensuring gender equality and Goal 10 on reducing inequality within and among countries. Goal 10 in particular aims to combat income inequality as well as promote the social, economic and political inclusion of all, irrespective of age, sex, disability, race, ethnicity, origin, religion or economic or other status; ensure equal opportunity and reduce inequalities of outcome, including by eliminating discriminatory laws, policies and practices; adopt policies, especially fiscal, wage and social protection policies, and progressively achieve greater equality; improve the regulation and monitoring of global financial markets and institutions; and ensure enhanced representation and voice for developing countries in decision-making in global international economic and financial institutions.

The imperative to promote more equitable development permeates all 17 goals of the 2030 Agenda, including through promoting universal, equitable and inclusive access to health, education, water, services, justice, opportunities and outcomes across many of the targets.

Indeed, the imperative to promote more equitable development permeates all 17 goals of the 2030 Agenda, including through promoting universal, equitable and inclusive access to health, education, water, services, justice, opportunities and outcomes across many of the targets. This is further underscored by a cross-cutting commitment to the disaggregation of data, which will help to ensure that no one is being left behind. The 2030 Agenda gives special attention to the poorest, most vulnerable and marginalized, including women and girls, all children, youth, persons with disabilities, people living with HIV/AIDS, older persons, indigenous peoples, refugees, internally displaced people, migrants, minorities, stateless people and all people facing discrimination.

The whole Agenda is underpinned by a commitment to achieve "universal respect … for equality and non-discrimination", and to "respect, protect and promote human rights … without distinction of any kind as to race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth, disability or other status". Data is to be disaggregated by "income, sex, age, race, ethnicity, migration status, disability, and geographic location and other characteristics relevant in national contexts", aligning with the grounds of discrimination prohibited in international law, while taking account of the commitment to support developing countries in this regard.

Against this background, the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination (CEB), while recognizing the respective mandates of its member organizations:

a. shares and strongly supports Member States' ambitions for a more equal world, that is respectful of human rights and dignity;

b. affirms the United Nations system's commitment at the highest level to pursue this vision, putting the imperative to eliminate discrimination and reduce inequalities — within and

among countries — at the forefront of United Nations efforts to support Member States in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda;

c.   reaffirms the United Nation system's commitment under the United Nations Charter to promote and encourage respect for human rights, including the principle of equality and non-discrimination for all people;

d.   calls on the CEB's three pillars (the High-level Committee on Programmes (HLCP), the High-level Committee on Management (HLCM) and the United Nations Development Group (UNDG)) and CEB member organizations to put this imperative to combat inequalities and discrimination at the centre of their strategic frameworks, policy guidance and global plans of action, as relevant, in support of implementation of the 2030 Agenda over the next 15 years, including to ensure that United Nations efforts prioritize the needs of those furthest behind first and ensure that no one is left behind;

e.   requests HLCP to develop a coherent, strategic, whole-of-system approach to implementing this imperative, in the form of a shared framework for action on combatting inequalities and discrimination that is operationally oriented and fully grounded in the United Nations' normative standards, and universally applicable for all SDGs in all countries;

f.   asks HLCP to reflect on how this approach could be operationalized in all countries and regions, including through UNDG; and

g.   calls on HLCP to present the shared framework for action on combatting inequalities and discrimination to CEB at its second regular session of 2016.

Executive Summary

Rising inequalities across the world have become a **defining challenge of our time**. Gross inequalities both within and among countries are putting sustainable development at risk, stirring social unrest, undermining social progress, threatening economic and political stability, and under-cutting human rights. Thus, they **threaten all pillars of the United Nations** system's work, from development and human rights to peace and security.

The scope of the problem is daunting. Inequalities of wealth and income have reached historic proportions, and inequalities in opportunities and outcomes relating to education, health, food security, employment, housing, health services and economic resources are having equally devastating effects. These inequalities **disproportionately affect particular groups** on the basis of race, sex, language, religion, age, ethnicity, disability, migrant or economic status, and so on. In addition, gender-based discrimination remains one of the most prevalent forms of discrimination across the globe.

In recognition of this challenge, the **2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development** is, in large measure, an **agenda for equality**. It recognizes "rising inequalities within and among countries", "enormous disparities of opportunity, wealth and power", and persistent "gender inequality" as "immense challenges" confronting the world today. So central is the imperative of combating inequalities and discrimination that the 2030 Agenda includes two goals explicitly focused on this issue: Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 5 (gender equality) and SDG 10 (inequality within and among countries). In addition, all other SDGs call for more equitable development and universal access to the constituent elements of development for all people. The 2030 Agenda calls for the disaggregation of data across all goals in order to measure the extent to which its central pledge to leave no one behind has been met.

States have committed to a full range of goals and targets that directly address discrimination and inequalities within and among countries. They include: remedying gross income inequalities;

promoting the social, economic and political inclusion of all; eliminating discriminatory laws, policies and practices; and adopting policies such as fiscal, wage and social protection policies, to progressively achieve greater equality. They also address global level inequalities by calling for improved regulation and monitoring of global financial markets and institutions, and enhanced representation and voice for developing countries in global economic and financial institutions.

Significantly, Member States have put "leaving no one behind" at the heart of the 2030 Agenda, so that all people in all countries may benefit from sustainable development and the full realization of human rights, without discrimination on the basis of sex, age, race, colour, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth, disability or other status. The special emphasis on those left furthest behind and the most excluded focuses in particular on women and girls, children, youth, persons with disabilities, persons living with HIV/AIDS, older persons, indigenous peoples, refugees, internally displaced persons and migrants, among others. Thus, progress can no longer be measured in averages or in the aggregate, and development must be seen to benefit all people.

Member States have put "leaving no one behind" at the heart of the 2030 Agenda, so that all people in all countries may benefit from sustainable development and the full realization of human rights, without discrimination on the basis of sex, age, race, colour, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth, disability or other status.

The **World Humanitarian Summit,** held in Istanbul on 23-24 May 2016, reinforced the 2030 Agenda with a strong focus on "leaving no one behind", inclusion and attention to the most vulnerable. The principles of humanity and impartiality require a strong focus on aid distribution without discrimination and on attention to vulnerabilities in humanitarian programmes and planning.

For these reasons, the United Nations System **Chief Executives Board for Coordination (CEB) called on the High-level Committee on Programmes (HLCP) to develop a shared framework for action on combating inequalities and discrimination** with a coherent, strategic and whole-of-system action plan that is operationally oriented and fully grounded in the United Nations norms and standards (including the Charter of the United Nations, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and relevant United Nations treaties and declarations) and in the SDGs.

Accordingly, this publication sets out a **conceptual framework** that includes *equality* (the imperative of moving towards substantive equality of opportunity and outcomes for all groups), *non-discrimination* (the prohibition of discrimination against individuals and groups on the grounds identified in international human rights treaties) and the broader concept of *equity* (understood as fairness in the distribution of costs, benefits and opportunities). It addresses both *horizontal* inequalities (between social groups) and *vertical* inequalities (e.g. income) as well as inequalities of both *opportunities* and *outcomes*. **Intergenerational** equity is also addressed, as are *inequalities among countries*.

In setting out a **shared framework for implementation**, the publication calls for the alignment of strategic frameworks and plans across the system, building on the many actions and areas of support already underway within individual United Nations system entities. This would ensure their coherence with the approach set out in this publication, filling any gaps, and developing a more joint

and integrated response. It proposes that the HLCP should play a role in monitoring the implementation of this framework in its periodically reporting to the CEB.

The publication also emphasizes that the **United Nations system** must ensure the availability of a **comprehensive set of support options for policies and programmes** that will help Member States to reduce inequalities and dismantle discrimination, and thereby to achieve the equality imperatives of the SDGs. It recognizes that rising inequalities are not inevitable, but rather the result of policies, laws, institutions and cultural practices, or rules of the game that shape the economy, and political and social systems. It also recognizes that the United Nations has a critical role to play in promoting the institutionalization of legal and policy measures, regulations and practices that promote greater equality and non-discrimination for all people.

The publication then sets out the **elements of a comprehensive and coherent package of policy and programme support** areas to combat discrimination and inequalities within and among countries at the country, regional and global levels.

Country level

- Set up programmes to promote institutions, laws, policies, and actions to **combat discrimination** on the basis of race, sex, language, ethnicity, religion, age, disability, caste, indigenous status, health status, migrant status, minority status, or other grounds, and to **advance equal access to justice**.

- Provide support for **reducing spatial or geographical inequalities between rural and urban areas and/or between industrialized and non-industrialized or remote regions**, including by promoting responsible and socially inclusive investments.

- Implement initiatives that **promote gender equality,** and eliminate all forms of discrimination and violence against women, and promote investments to close the gender gap and that strengthen support for institutions for gender equality and the empowerment of women.

- Assist in **strengthening of economic governance**, regulation, accountability and the rule of law in the economic sphere.

- Sustain **full employment** and inclusive economic policies, promoting decent work.

- Support the elimination of employment discrimination and **reinforce labour rights**, including decent work, minimum wages (including for migrant workers), freedom of association and collective bargaining, and the eradication of forced and child labour.

- Implement initiatives to combat all forms of age discrimination against older persons in employment and promote **youth employment and socio-economic inclusion of all ages**, and to address the vulnerability of young people to higher unemployment and lower quality of jobs and to longer and more insecure school-to-work transitions.

- Provide assistance for **social protection systems** that reduce inequalities through safety nets that maintain the right to an adequate standard of living for all. **Ensure support for universal health coverage** and universal access to healthcare that are free of catastrophic out-of-pocket expenditures that result from health costs that produce poverty and inequality.

- Establish programmes for universal access to **education, water, sanitation, care** and other economic and social rights to promote greater equality in opportunities and outcomes.

- Provide assistance in achieving universal **access to information and communications technologies (ICTs)** and the narrowing of the digital divide.

- Set up programmes to support **redistributive fiscal policy and progressive taxation**, reverse extreme concentrations of wealth, and progressively achieve greater equality.

- Provide assistance **for tackling illicit outflows and tax evasion**.

- Strengthen the protection of freedom of expression, association and assembly, insulate **democratic institutions and processes** from elite political capture, ensure equal political participation for all women and men, and promote public access to information.

- Create programmes to reinforce **private sector accountability,** including by implementing the *Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights*, ensuring the effective regulation of businesses by governments, conducting **social, environmental and human rights impact assessments,** and implementing due diligence safeguards to prevent negative impacts.

- **Support measures to protect vulnerable, marginalized and excluded communities** in order to prevent, mitigate and build resilience to the impacts of climate, natural disasters, desertification, land degradation and humanitarian crises.

Regional level

- Build a **bridge between the global and national levels**, including by adapting and incorporating elements of this equality framework into regional policy frameworks and transmitting them to the country level, and by informing the global agenda with national experiences.

- **Conduct studies and share best practices** to deepen the understanding of the multiple dimensions of inequality identified in this framework.

- **Develop indicators and operational guidelines** to follow-up on the implementation of regionally or internationally agreed agendas at the national and local levels.

- As part of the follow-up and review of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, review in the regional forums on sustainable development the status of **implementation of the agenda of equality** and build on the experience and sectoral guidance of the regional commissions' intergovernmental subsidiary bodies.

- Promote **pro-equality public policies** as core elements of the regional development agenda.

Global level

- Promote a more **equitable global trading system** that addresses inequities built into existing trade rules, particularly for the least developed countries (LDCs), and that implements the principle of special and differential treatment.

- Develop a more **equitable international financial system**, including better regulation of global financial markets and of speculation, the equitable participation of all States in the institutions of global governance, as identified in the 2030 Agenda, and official development assistance (ODA) to countries with people in the greatest need.

- Reinforce **national policy space** to promote inequality-reducing measures and to correct policy incoherence between intellectual property and trade rules, public health, and human rights, including by implementing Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS) Agreement on Public Health.

- Cooperate in **technology transfer** to promote greater equality.

- Strengthen global governance of **migration** in a way that recognizes the rights of all migrants and refugees under universal human rights and international refugee law.

An additional essential element for the implementation of the framework is a **common, system-wide approach to the analysis and monitoring of inequalities and discrimination,** and their root causes. To this end, the framework proposes to build on current good practices within the United Nations system, and also calls for more systematic use of those existing tools and expertise, learning from practice and investing in what works, and adopting new and innovative tools and methodologies to capture the key elements identified in the conceptual approach outlined in the framework.

The United Nations system has a critical role to play in ensuring that the SDG review mechanisms engage a wide range of stakeholders, in particular civil society and marginalized people who may still be left behind, so that their authoritative voices inform the process.

The key elements include: a common approach to "leaving no one behind"; support for greater data disaggregation across a wider range of grounds for all SDG indicators; systematic analysis of available (disaggregated) data (qualitative and quantitative) on marginalized groups; new tools for analysing horizontal and vertical inequalities, as well as discrimination, stigma, exclusion, and equity issues; identification of subjects of multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination; joined-up analysis of the drivers, root causes and underlying determinants of inequalities and discrimination; and *ex ante* and *ex post* impact assessments to gauge the impact of United Nations programmes on the situation of particular groups and on inequalities and discrimination.

Under the framework, implementation will also focus on **strengthening SDG accountability measures** at the national and global levels. The publication argues that the United Nations system should use its convening power to encourage accountability through transparent tracking of equality aspects of SDG progress, and to alert governments and other actors of retrogression, with the aim of getting back on track or changing course, where necessary. Finally, the United Nations system has a critical role to play in ensuring that the SDG review mechanisms engage a wide range of stakeholders,

in particular civil society and marginalized people who may still be left behind, so that their authoritative voices inform the process.

The publication concludes with **next steps for implementing this Shared Framework for Action**. These include:

1. the integration of the Shared Framework in the strategic frameworks, policy guidance, and plans of CEB member organizations;

2. consideration by the United Nations Development Group (UNDG) of the means for supporting operationalization of the Shared Framework at the country level; and

3. periodic review of the Framework by the High-level Committee on Programmes (HLCP) and reporting thereon to the CEB.

I. Introduction

Rising inequalities across the world have become one of the defining challenges of our time.

Deepening, divisive and destabilizing inequalities both within and among countries are putting sustainable development at risk, stirring social unrest, undermining social progress and threatening economic and political stability, which affect all of the pillars of the United Nations system's work, from development and human rights to peace and security.

In September 2015, United Nations Member States unanimously adopted the new global development agenda, Transforming our World: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (General Assembly resolution 70/1), which puts the imperative to "leave no one behind" and to "reach the furthest behind first" at its heart. It not only aims to end poverty and hunger, but also to "combat inequalities within and among countries"; to "build peaceful, just and inclusive societies"; promote gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls" and protect all human rights, including the right to development, so that all human beings can fulfil their potential in dignity and equality in a healthy environment.

The 2030 Agenda recognizes the risks of "rising inequalities within and among countries", "enormous disparities of opportunity, wealth and power", and persistent "gender inequality" as "immense challenges" confronting the world today. Member States have therefore committed to goals and targets that address discrimination and inequalities within and among countries. Targets include: addressing income inequalities; promoting the social, economic and political inclusion of all; eliminating discriminatory laws, policies and practices; adopting policies, especially fiscal, wage and social protection policies; progressively achieving greater equality; addressing global inequalities, including by improving the regulation and monitoring of global financial markets and institutions; and ensuring enhanced representation of developing countries in decision-making in global international economic and financial institutions.

Member States have put "leaving no one behind" at the heart of the 2030 Agenda so that all people in all countries may benefit from development and the full realization of human rights, without discrimination on the basis of sex, age, race, colour, language, religion, political or other opinions, national and social origin, property, birth, disability or other status. There is also a special focus on those left furthest behind and the most excluded, including women and girls, children, youth, persons with disabilities, persons living with HIV/AIDs, older persons, indigenous peoples, refugees, internally displaced persons and migrants, among others.

To be fit for purpose, the United Nations system must be prepared to support Member States in meeting this imperative. The CEB and the High-level Committee on Programmes (HLCP) have therefore focused on reducing inequalities and discrimination as a central priority in United Nations system support for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The CEB's common principles for support to Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) implementation therefore also focused on addressing inequality, leaving no one behind, and reaching the furthest behind first.[2]

In this context, CEB endorsed this shared framework for action on combating inequalities and discrimination to underpin United Nations system support for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

II. The challenge: rising inequalities as a threat to sustainable development

The weight of economic evidence now suggests that high levels of income inequality threaten the stability and sustainability of economic growth.[3] It is also now widely acknowledged that economic inequality and its associated increasing indebtedness are key factors that contribute to financial crises, including the 2007-08 global economic crisis.[4]

High levels of inequality reduce the efficiency of economic growth in contributing to poverty reduction since the benefits of economic growth flow to affluent groups, rather than the poor.[5] They also reduce the likelihood of public spending on improving social service coverage and outcomes, including mortality rates, learning levels and nutrition, given the elite capture of political systems.[6] High inequalities are transmitted across generations and limit equal opportunities for children, which are largely determined by their parents' incomes and outcomes,[7] thus demonstrating the interlinkages between equality of opportunities and equality of outcomes.

Empirical studies also show that deep and excessive inequalities between ethnic and religious groups in income, access to economic resources, social services, political participation or justice threaten social cohesion, radicalize groups, and heighten the risk of tensions escalating into political crisis and violent conflict.[8] Rising inequalities are therefore a concern for society as a whole, not only because they undercut poverty reduction and economic development, but also because they undermine the enjoyment of human rights, social cohesion, peace and sustainable development.
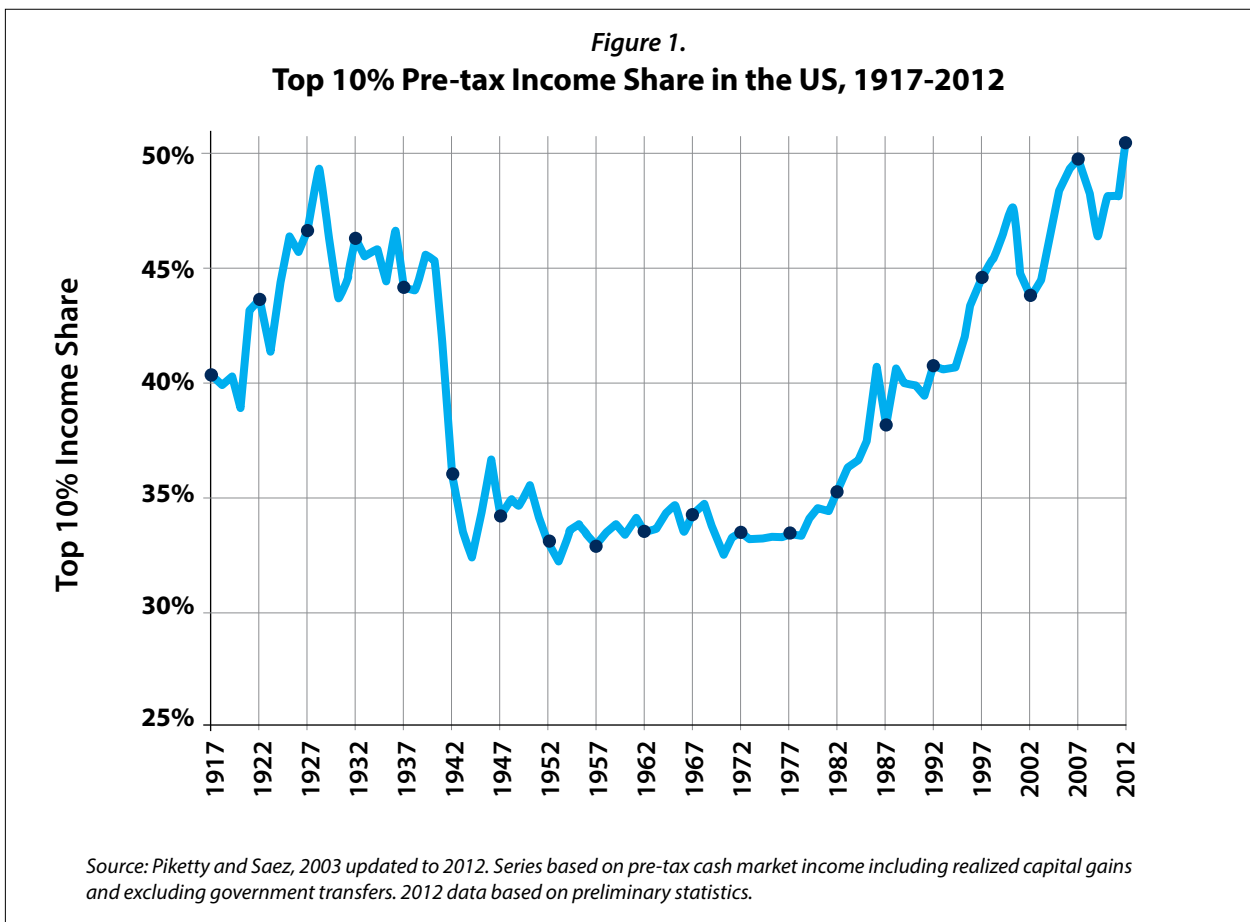
A.   Inequalities of wealth and income

A recent International Monetary Fund (IMF) discussion note has argued that "widening income inequality is the defining challenge of our time" with the gap between rich and poor at its highest level for decades in the advanced developing economies.[9] Income inequality has increased substantially since 1990 in most of the developed countries, with Asia and Eastern Europe also seeing marked increases in inequality.[10] The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) has shown that by 2014, more than 75 per cent of the population of developing countries lived in societies with a more unequal income distribution than they had in the 1990s.[11] Only Latin America has seen declines in income inequality, which is a direct result of recent policy decisions to reverse inequalities, yet it remains the most unequal region in the world.[12]

The work of the French economist Thomas Piketty has graphically illustrated how inequalities in the developed economies are reaching levels not seen since before the 1929 Great Crash and the Great Depression, as illustrated in Figure 1 on pre-tax income inequality in the United States.

Inequalities in wealth are even more extreme than inequalities in income.[13]

Globally, as highlighted in a recent IMF publication, the top 1 per cent of the world's population now owns almost half of the world's wealth.[14] Recent reports from the Oxfam suggest that the world's 84 richest individuals now own as much as the poorest 3.5 billion people combined. In most countries

Figure 1.
Top 10% Pre-tax Income Share in the US, 1917-2012

Source: Piketty and Saez, 2003 updated to 2012. Series based on pre-tax cash market income including realized capital gains and excluding government transfers. 2012 data based on preliminary statistics.

with available data, the share held by the top 1 per cent is rising at the expense of the bottom 90 per cent.[15] In the United States of America, the top 1 per cent now holds one-third of the total wealth, while low- and middle-class households are increasingly indebted. Inequality deepened after the global economic crisis of 2007-2008, with the wealthiest capturing most of the gains of government responses to the crisis such as quantitative easing,[16] while austerity policies have disproportionately affected the less well off,[17] illustrating how policy choices can have a marked distributional impact.

B. Other forms of inequality

However, there are stark inequalities that are not only related to income and wealth, but also intrinsically related to other forms of inequalities, which also amount to failures to achieve internationally agreed human rights. These include inequalities in opportunities and outcomes related to education, health, food security, employment, housing and health services, as well as in accessing economic resources.[18]

The SDGs reflect the commitment of Member States to curb inequalities across a broad range of outcomes and opportunities.

These inequalities affect some populations disproportionately, often because of their sex, age, ethnicity, disability, migrant, health or economic status etc. For example, the world's poorest children are four times more likely not to go to school than the world's richest children, and five times more likely not to complete primary school.[19] Migrant and stateless children may be excluded from school due to their uncertain legal status; girls may be withdrawn from school to care for the family; and pregnant girls and children including with disabilities are frequently excluded from school and face institutionalized discrimination, stigmatization and neglect. Around 43 per cent of out-of-school children at primary and secondary levels are children living in countries affected by humanitarian crises.

Monitoring income-related inequalities should thus be complemented with other measures of inequalities, including the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) deprivation-based measures, based on internationally agreed definitions of child rights related to deprivation of children's needs for adequate nutrition, safe drinking water, decent sanitation facilities, health, shelter, education and access to information.[20] The SDGs reflect the commitment of Member States to curb inequalities across a broad range of outcomes and opportunities, and the SDG indicators will enable the systematic measurement and tracking of overlapping inequalities in economic, social and environmental sectors.

C. Gender-based discrimination

Gender-based discrimination remains one of the most prevalent forms of discrimination, creating barriers to the development of the full potential of half of the world's population. Deep-seated discriminatory norms and harmful gender stereotypes, prejudices and practices, including unequal pay for equal work and gender-based violence against women and girls, continue to prevent equality and the full realization of women's human rights. Progress in promoting gender equality has been

slow, with stagnation and even regression in some countries, and a backlash against women and girl's rights in a number of contexts. Discrimination in the law persists in many countries, particularly in family, nationality, health inheritance laws, including laws that restrict women's access to and control over resources. In many countries, laws and regulations also restrict women's access to sexual and reproductive health services that only women need. Unmarried women and adolescents are very often denied access to sexual and reproductive health services, information and education due to economic, social, legal and cultural barriers.[21]

Women remain underrepresented in decision-making in the public and private arenas at all levels and sectors. Women in the workforce face poorer conditions, unfair care burdens and lack of decent work, and are overrepresented in vulnerable and informal employment having fewer prospects for advancement. Women's salaries are lower than men's in almost all countries, and according to the International Labour Organization (ILO), the gender pay gap persists where women earn on average of 77 per cent of what men earn for work of equal value; there is an even wider absolute gap for higher-earning women. There is evidence that women with children incur a further wage penalty, known as the "motherhood pay gap".

At the current rate of progress, pay equity between women and men will not be achieved until 2086.[22] Unequal pay has cumulative impacts, resulting in greater inequality and poverty for older women.[23] Women also continue to bear heavy and disproportionate unpaid care workloads, and face unacceptably high levels of preventable maternal mortality, particularly for adolescent girls, indigenous and rural women, women belonging to minority groups, and stateless and displaced women.

D.   Discrimination against other population groups

Many other forms of discrimination also persist against other population groups (e.g. discrimination on the basis of race, ethnicity, religion, age, disability, sexual orientation and gender identity, etc.), among whom are many people affected by multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination that produce and reproduce deep inequalities across generations. People from particular ethnicities, castes, minorities, and indigenous peoples, as well as groups in situations of vulnerability, persons with disabilities or mental health problems, migrants, refugees, stateless and displaced persons, children, youth, older persons, slum dwellers, people living with HIV/AIDS and sexual minorities (especially women), are often excluded, disempowered and discriminated against in law, policy and practice, resulting in inequalities in both opportunities and outcomes.

According to one study measuring the progress towards achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) in Nepal, under-five mortality rates among Dalit communities (90 per 1,000 live births) were more than double those of the Newar caste (43 per 1,000 live births), while in Viet Nam, only 7 per cent of ethnic minority households had access to improved sanitation compared to 43 per cent of the majority Kinh and Chinese groups. Similarly, in South Africa, the incomes of black Africans were only 13 per cent of white incomes.[24] The most recent ILO Global Wage Report highlighted that discrimination and wage penalties suffered by women, migrant workers and workers in the informal economy who are often from disadvantaged groups contribute to income inequality.[25]

Racism and xenophobia are often at the root of discrimination against particular groups, often involving restrictions or restrictive interpretations of laws, policies and practices, which can also affect the situation of, *inter alia*, migrants, asylum-seekers, refugees, internally displaced persons and stateless persons. Islamophobia has become a global phenomenon, challenging the realization of a broad range of human rights for millions. Indigenous peoples face particular challenges: they are frequently underrepresented politically; they are denied control over their own development based on their own values, needs, rights and priorities; they lack access to social and other services; and they are frequently the victims of forced displacement as a result of the exploitation of natural resources and other development projects.[26] Some groups are also particularly vulnerable and marginalized because governments refuse to protect them from discrimination and exclusion, such as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transsexual and intersex (LGBTI) persons, men who have sex with men, sex workers, people living with HIV/AIDS, people who inject drugs, prisoners and people in detention.

E. Drivers of inequality

Inequalities are deeply entrenched by structural drivers and barriers across all economic, social, political, cultural urban and environmental domains. These drivers intersect and reinforce each other, and can have cumulative, mutually reinforcing effects that lead to systematic disadvantage and the perpetuation of discrimination, inequality and exclusion from generation to generation. Addressing inequalities therefore also entails addressing structural barriers reversing unequal distributions of power, resources and opportunities, and challenging discriminatory laws, policies, social norms and stereotypes. Widely adopted human development measures, such as those developed by UNDP, have widened recognition of the challenges of poverty and inequality, enabling many countries to better understand and track multiple and overlapping causes and manifestations.[27] The Inequality-adjusted Human Development Index (IHDI), for example, calculates the human development costs of inequality by country.[28]

Drivers of inequality within and between countries relate to a range of different issues.[29] Climate change, for example, often disproportionately affects the poorest, most marginalized and least resilient (e.g. poorer subsistence farmers or people who live in informal housing on flood plains), who contribute the least to it. Inequitable distribution of the costs and benefits of the use of natural resources, the costs of pollution and environmental degradation can reinforce patterns of inequality.

Poverty and inequality often result when the poorest and most marginalized lose access to natural resources that they depend on for their livelihoods, such as lands, fishing grounds and forests. A lack of land tenure security and of inheritance rights are fundamental drivers of inequality, especially for women, indigenous groups, minorities and rural populations. Lack of political representation and of access to justice, access to information, and of access to and use of ICTs (the "digital divide") can also result in deepening inequalities. There is a positive correlation between high income inequality and high crime and imprisonment rates,[30] where most prisoners face even further socio-economic

> Addressing inequalities therefore also entails addressing structural barriers reversing unequal distributions of power, resources and opportunities, and challenging discriminatory laws, policies, social norms and stereotypes.

exclusion and stigma after release, leading to an endless cycle of poverty, marginalization, criminality and imprisonment.

Political, economic and social instabilities bring new risks and growing vulnerabilities that can aggravate and perpetuate inequalities, including insecure and informal work and incomes, the breakdown of social systems as a result of urbanization, and exposure to a volatile global economy and price fluctuations.

People face differential risks of vulnerabilities to conflict and disasters, and those living in conflict-affected or fragile States are particularly difficult to reach. Foreign occupation, colonial domination, all forms of apartheid and racist governments are classic drivers of gross inequalities, which have severe impacts both on present and future generations. Protracted displacement creates extremely high levels of social and economic inequality and erodes people's resilience.[31]

Many inequalities emerge as a result of the way markets operate and are (or are not) regulated, and how production factors are rewarded, as well as the ways in which rules are structured at the national and international levels in trade and financial systems. In an increasingly open and interconnected world economy, national and global inequality dynamics are closely interrelated, with structural shifts and changing production patterns in the global economy affecting inequalities both within and between countries.[32]

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There are also structural inequalities arising from differences in productivity between countries and between different sectors of economies, which are driven by technological, market power or industrial relations dynamics, among others. Inequalities include intergenerational disparities since subsequent generations are left with poorer natural resources, and spatial or geographical inequalities. Such geographical inequalities include the divide between: rural and urban areas; industrialized and non-industrialized regions; central and remote regions; developed and developing countries; and Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States.[33]

III. The United Nations mandate for sustainable and more equitable development

A. The 2030 Agenda: an agenda for equality and leaving no one behind

As a result of rising awareness of the implications of rising inequalities, Member States have instilled the commitment to leave no one behind and to combat inequalities and discrimination.at the heart of the agenda for more sustainable development.

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development marks a sharp shift in the development paradigm. It responds to the critique that, while important progress was achieved under the MDGs, too much attention was focused on statistical averages and national aggregates, obscuring the rise in inequalities and glossing over the persistence of structural discrimination. Where insufficient attention was paid to who was winning and who was losing from various types of development policies, efforts towards achieving MDGs often failed to address rising inequalities.[34] The 2030 Agenda reflects the will of the global community and gives the United Nations a mandate — and indeed a duty — to assist Member States in meeting this imperative in the implementation of the Agenda.

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development:

- **Identifies rising inequalities within and among countries as an immense challenge that must be confronted:** It sees "rising inequalities within and among countries", "enormous disparities of opportunity, wealth and power" and "gender inequality" as some of the "immense challenges"

confronting the world.[35] It identifies inequality as a factor that can "give rise to violence, insecurity and injustice"[36] and declares that "combating inequality within and among countries" is necessary for achieving poverty eradication, preserving the planet, creating sustainable economic growth and fostering social inclusion.[37] It aims to build "just and inclusive societies" that provide "equal access to justice" and that "are based on respect for human rights".[38]

- **Anchors the imperative to address inequalities in the normative basis of Member States' existing human rights commitments to secure equality and non-discrimination for all:** The entire Agenda is guided by "the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations, including full respect for international law" and is "explicitly grounded in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, international human rights treaties, the Millennium Declaration and the 2005 World Summit Outcome Document" as well as the Declaration on the Right to Development[39] and "other international instruments relating to human rights and international law".[40] Very significantly, it is "to be implemented in a manner that is consistent with the rights and obligations of States under international law,"[41] which include obligations to combat discrimination and inequalities.[42] The Agenda therefore declares a determination to "*realize* the human rights of all",[43] to promote and achieve gender equality,[44] "end all forms of discrimination against all women and girls"[45] and to "ensure that all human beings can fulfil their potential in ... equality".[46] It resolves to combat inequalities within countries, establish just and inclusive societies, and to protect human rights.[47] It envisages a "just, equitable, tolerant, open and socially inclusive" world of "equality and non-discrimination; respect for race, ethnicity and cultural diversity; and of equal opportunity".[48] It emphasizes the responsibilities of all States are "to respect, protect and promote human rights and fundamental freedoms for all, without distinction of any kind as to race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth, disability or other status".[49] Importantly, it is explicitly directed to "ensure equal opportunity" and to "reduce inequalities of outcome".[50]

- **Aims at addressing inequalities throughout all the SDGs, including SDGs 5 and 10:** So central is the challenge of inequality to the 2030 Agenda that two of the 17 SDGs are entirely dedicated to this objective: SDG 10 is directed at reducing inequality within and among countries and SDG 5, at achieving gender equality and empowering all women and girls. However, all the SDGs and their targets aim to achieve more equitable development. Education, for example, must be *inclusive and equitable,* and gender disparities eliminated,[51] and all girls and boys are to complete free, *equitable* and quality primary and secondary education.[52] All women and men are ensured *equal access* to affordable and quality technical, vocational and tertiary education, including university.[53] All people, irrespective of sex, age, race, ethnicity, and persons with disabilities, migrants, indigenous peoples, children, and youth, especially those in vulnerable situations, are to have access to life-long learning opportunities.[54] In addition, persons in vulnerable situations, including persons with disabilities, indigenous peoples and children in vulnerable situations, are to be provided with *equal access* to all levels of education and vocational training.[55]

- Similarly, the Agenda targets universal and *equitable* access to safe and affordable drinking water for all[56] and promises the development of infrastructure with a focus on *equitable* access for all.[57] Specific targets seek to promote and enforce non-discriminatory laws and policies,[58] and

actions[59] that eliminate the laws, policies and practices that are discriminatory.[60] They also seek to ensure equal access to justice[61] and to promote the social, economic and political inclusion of all, irrespective of age, sex, disability, race, ethnicity, origin, religion or economic or other status.[62] Other targets are set out to achieve universal health coverage and access to quality health care[63] and provide non-discriminatory access to transport systems[64] and to green and public spaces,[65] with special attention to the needs of those in vulnerable situations, women, children, persons with disabilities and older persons.[66] They are also set out to promote fair and equitable sharing of the benefits arising from the utilization of genetic resources.[67]

- **Focuses on leaving no one behind:** The Agenda pledges that no one will be left behind and that the goals and targets are to be met "for all peoples and for all segments of society" and that efforts will be made "to reach the furthest behind first".[68] It recognizes that "people who are vulnerable must be empowered" and explicitly includes children, youth, persons with disabilities, people living with HIV/AIDS, older persons, indigenous peoples, refugees, internally displaced persons, migrants, people living in poverty and in areas affected by complex humanitarian emergencies and in areas affected by terrorism,[69] and people living under colonial and foreign occupation.[70] It envisages a world where women and girls enjoy full gender equality and all legal, social and economic barriers to their empowerment are removed.[71] It also pledges to ensure full respect for the human rights of migrants regardless of their migration status, refugees and displaced persons, and seeks to strengthen the resilience of host communities.[72] The World Humanitarian Summit also recognized the centrality of inclusion, non-discrimination and of leaving no one behind.

  > **The Agenda pledges that no one will be left behind and that the goals and targets are to be met "for all peoples and for all segments of society" and that efforts will be made "to reach the furthest behind first".**

- **Makes gender equality a particular priority:** The Agenda states that the SDGs seek to achieve gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls.[73] It pledges "significant increase in investments to close the gender gap and strengthen support for institutions in relation to gender equality and the empowerment of women at the global, regional and national levels". All forms of discrimination and violence against women and girls are to be eliminated, and the Agenda should be implemented with a "systematic mainstreaming of a gender perspective".[74] Specific targets aim to end all forms of discrimination and violence against all women and girls,[75] including the elimination of harmful practices such as child, early and forced marriage and female genital mutilation,[76] and to adopt and strengthen sound policies and enforceable legislation for the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls at all levels.[77] Other targets aim to: eliminate gender disparities at all levels of education; ensure equal access to all levels of education and vocational training;[78] ensure that all learners acquire education for gender equality;[79] ensure women's equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision-making in political, economic and public life;[80] and ensure universal access to sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights.[81] The empowerment of women and girls includes legal and policy measures to ensure universal access to sexual and reproductive health by enabling them to make autonomous decisions concerning their own sexuality and reproductive rights. In terms of women's economic empowerment, targets include: ensure full and productive employment and decent work; achieve equal pay for work of equal value;[82] recognize and value

unpaid care and domestic work; and give women equal rights to economic resources as well as access to ownership and control over land and other forms of property, financial services, inheritance and natural resources.[83]

- **Reflects an imperative to reduce income inequalities as well as eradicating poverty:** The Agenda observes that sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth will only be possible if wealth is shared and income inequality is addressed.[84] It includes targets to eradicate extreme poverty[85] and to "ensure that all men and women, in particular the poor and vulnerable, have equal rights to economic resources, as well as access to basic services, ownership and control over land and other forms of property, inheritance, natural resources…".[86] It includes targets to progressively achieve and sustain income growth of the bottom 40 per cent of the population at a rate higher than the national average,[87] and to adopt policies, especially fiscal, wage and social protection policies, to progressively achieve greater equality,[88] including by promoting full and productive employment and decent work for all. There are targets to improve the regulation and monitoring of global financial markets and institutions, and strengthen the implementation of such regulations.[89] Other elements are directed to remedying key policy lapses that have contributed to growing income inequality, by institutionalising universal health coverage, labour rights, decent jobs, social protection, inclusive education, and so on.

- **Includes a focus on intergenerational equity for sustainable development:** The Agenda states that it is determined to protect the planet "so that it can support the needs of the present and future generations".[90] In addition, the Agenda will be implemented "for the full benefit of all, for today's generation and for future generations".[91]

- **Aims to reduce inequalities between countries:** The Agenda pledges to combat inequalities among countries,[92] noting that progress has been uneven, particularly in Africa, least developed countries, landlocked developing countries, and Small Island Developing States,[93] and expresses a "wish to see the Goals and targets met for all nations".[94] To this end, it contains commitments to promote a non-discriminatory and equitable multilateral trading system[95] under the World Trade Organization,[96] broaden and strengthen the participation of developing countries in the institutions of global governance,[97] and to implement the principle of special and differential treatment for developing countries, in particular least developed countries, in accordance with World Trade Organization agreements.[98]

- It reaffirms the Doha Declaration on the TRIPS Agreement and Public Health, and affirms the right of developing countries to make use of flexibilities to protect public health and provide access to medicines for their populations.[99] In addition, targets are set to encourage official development assistance (ODA) and financial flows, including foreign direct investment, to States where the need is greatest, in particular least developed countries, African countries, Small Island Developing States, and landlocked developing countries.[100] Others will ensure enhanced representation and voice for developing countries in decision-making in global international economic and financial institutions.[101]

- **Commits to measuring and monitoring the reduction of inequalities over the next 15 years:** The Agenda commits to "developing broader measures of progress to complement gross

domestic product (GDP)"[102] and recognizes that disaggregated data will be needed to help with the measurement of progress and to ensure that no one is left behind.[103] Follow-up and review processes at all levels are to be "people-centred, gender-sensitive, respect human rights, and have a particular focus on the poorest, most vulnerable and those furthest behind".[104] All data are to be disaggregated by income, sex, age, race, ethnicity, migration status, disability and geographic location, and other characteristics relevant in national contexts.[105] To this end, the outcome document calls for support to be provided to developing countries in strengthening the capacity of national statistical offices[106] and data systems in order to ensure access to data[107] disaggregated by income, gender, age, race, ethnicity, migratory status, disability, geographic location and other characteristics relevant in national contexts.[108]

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is therefore, in large measure, an agenda for equality. Member States have chosen to put the fight against inequalities and discrimination at the core of the Agenda, providing a compelling new political mandate for the United Nations system.

B.   The United Nations standing mandate on equality and non-discrimination

The United Nations system also has a standing legal mandate and a central duty to promote and encourage respect for human rights, including the principles of equality and non-discrimination, through the 1945 Charter of the United Nations, which sets out that one of the core purposes of the United Nations is:

> To achieve international co-operation in solving international problems of an economic, social, cultural, or humanitarian character, and in promoting and encouraging respect for human rights and for fundamental freedoms for all without distinction as to race, sex, language, or religion (Article 1 of the Charter of the United Nations).

The 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights also emphasizes that "[a]ll human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights" and requires the creation of a social and international order in which all human rights can be fully realized. Many subsequent international human rights treaties give substance to this vision, including by defining and expanding the grounds of discrimination that are prohibited under international human rights law. The 1986 Declaration on the Right to Development further calls for more equitable and non-discriminatory development, with the meaningful participation of all and the fair distribution of benefits of development.

Equality and non-discrimination are fundamental principles of international human rights law as codified by the United Nations and are essential to the exercise and enjoyment of all civil, cultural, economic, political and social rights. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights prohibits discrimination of any kind as to "race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status" that has the intention or effect of nullifying or impairing the equal enjoyment or exercise of a human right. The inclusion of "other status" indicates that this list is not exhaustive. Indeed, international human rights mechanisms have since specified that "other status" includes discrimination on the basis of age (with attention to youth and older persons), nationality, marital and family status, sexual orientation and gender identity, health status (including HIV), place of

residence, economic and social situation, and civil, political or other status. The principles of equality and non-discrimination are included in all the core United Nations human rights treaties[109] and have been defined in detail by the bodies that monitor the implementation of the treaties.[110]

> **Example of non-discrimination provisions in international human rights law**
>
> *Convention on the Rights of the Child, Article 2*
>
> 1. States Parties shall respect and ensure the rights set forth in the present Convention to each child within their jurisdiction without discrimination of any kind, irrespective of the child's or his or her parent's or legal guardian's race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national, ethnic or social origin, property, disability, birth or other status.
>
> 2. States Parties shall take all appropriate measures to ensure that the child is protected against all forms of discrimination or punishment on the basis of the status, activities, expressed opinions, or beliefs of the child's parents, legal guardians, or family members.

These principles are also central to ILO labour conventions; for example, the Discrimination (Employment and Occupation) Convention, 1958 (No. 111) defines discrimination as any distinction, exclusion or preference made on the basis of race, colour, sex, religion, political opinion, national extraction or social origin that has the effect of nullifying or impairing equality of opportunity or treatment in employment or occupation.

Expanding the grounds for the disaggregation of data is thus critical for meeting the obligations of non-discrimination and equality. While the listed prohibited grounds of discrimination may not easily translate into operational variables for disaggregated data in all instances, they constitute a universally accepted legal standard and an obligation to which governments are already committed. As such, they provide authoritative guidance for data disaggregation efforts at global, regional, national and sub-national levels and should also guide efforts to use data to capture the impact of intersecting forms of discrimination.

The responsibilities of the United Nations system in promoting equality and non-discrimination are thus not only a political or policy choice, but also a core mandate and duty under the Charter of the United Nations and international law adopted under United Nations auspices.

The responsibilities of the United Nations system in promoting equality and non-discrimination are thus not only a political or policy choice, but also a core mandate and duty under the Charter of the United Nations and international law adopted under United Nations auspices. The United Nations system must hold true to these norms and standards in all its efforts to assist Member States in fulfilling the human rights obligations into which they have themselves voluntarily entered, as well as in meeting the SDGs. Indeed, the 2030 Agenda calls for implementation to be carried out in a manner fully consistent with international law, including international human rights law, and recognizes the role of the United Nations system in supporting Member States in this implementation.[111]

IV. Conceptual framework: a United Nations approach to inequalities and discrimination

The United Nations approach to "leaving no one behind" in support of Sustainable Development Goal implementation

The United Nations approach to "leaving no one behind" not only entails reaching the poorest of the poor, but also seeks to combat discrimination and rising inequalities within and among countries, and their root causes. This is grounded in the United Nations normative standards, including the principles of equality and non-discrimination that are foundational principles of the Charter of the United Nations, international human rights law and national legal systems across the world.

Leaving no one behind means moving beyond assessing average and aggregate progress, towards ensuring progress for all population groups at a disaggregated level. This will require disaggregating data to identify who is being excluded or discriminated against, how and why, as well as who is experiencing multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination and inequalities. This will entail identifying unjust, avoidable or extreme inequalities in outcome and opportunities, and patterns of discrimination in law, policies and practices. This will also entail addressing patterns of exclusion, structural constraints and unequal power relations that produce and reproduce inequalities over generations, and moving towards both formal and substantive equality for all groups in society. This will require supporting legal, policy, institutional and other measures to promote equality and reverse the trend of rising inequalities. This will also require free, active and meaningful participation of all stakeholders, particularly the most marginalized, in review and follow-up processes for ensuring accountability, recourse and remedies to all.

The United Nations approach, like the 2030 Agenda, is anchored in the United Nations normative standards on equality and non-discrimination, as defined in international human rights law agreed under United Nations auspices, including the Charter of the United Nations, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other human rights treaties, as well as the labour conventions. The

approach should also be underpinned by the concept of equity defined in other human rights instruments such as the Declaration on the Right to Development.

This above entails a focus on three closely related but distinct concepts: **equality** (i.e. the imperative of moving towards substantive equality of opportunity and outcomes for all groups), **non-discrimination** (i.e. the prohibition of discrimination against individuals and groups on the grounds identified in international human rights treaties) and the broader concept of **equity** (i.e. fairness in the distribution of costs, benefits and opportunities).

From this perspective, it is important to identify the following:

- **Equality in opportunities and outcomes.** Equality requires both formal and substantive equality in opportunities and outcomes (see below). This can be linked to the concept of horizontal and vertical inequalities. Horizontal inequalities are the inequalities that exist between ethnic and other population groups. Vertical inequalities are the inequalities between individuals or households that are not related to group-based distinctions. While horizontal inequalities have been shown to be correlated with a higher risk of violent social conflict, the data suggest that extreme vertical inequalities (e.g. extreme income inequalities) risk destabilizing political, economic and social systems.

- **Discrimination and multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination.** Discrimination is the inequitable treatment of individuals on the grounds of gender, race, age, ethnicity, disability, indigenous identity or any other status identified in international treaties. Many individuals face multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination that exacerbate their disadvantage. For example, an elderly, indigenous woman with a disability may face intersecting and overlapping forms of discrimination on the basis of her gender, age, indigenous status and disability, which will result in greater marginalization and exclusion from social, economic and political life.

- **Equity and fairness.** Equity can be understood as the fair treatment of all population groups in society and fairness in the distribution of costs, benefits and opportunities. This overlaps with the concept of "equality" but is not identical to it. While the concept of "equity" brings a helpful focus on "fairness", the concept of "equality" brings an additional focus on legal protection, particularly for groups that are discriminated against; for example, gender equality and racial equality are legally binding obligations institutionalized in most national and international legal systems.

This normative approach thus requires focusing on systematically identifying and addressing both horizontal and vertical inequalities.

Horizontal inequalities between population groups are often the direct or indirect result of discriminatory laws, policies or practices, or structural constraints (as set out clearly in SDGs 5 and 10). Identifying horizontal inequalities in both opportunities and outcomes between different population groups can serve as a useful proxy for measuring the impacts of direct or indirect discrimination or similar structural constraints. Clearly not all horizontal inequalities between population groups are unjust, nor are all disparities in outcomes between population groups due to discrimination.[112] However, where systematic horizontal inequalities are observed, these inequalities are more likely to be unjust or the result of circumstances or barriers beyond the individual's control. This could

include, for example, consistently unequal health outcomes of minorities compared to the majority population, or systematically lower wages for women than for men.

Assessing horizontal inequalities can rely on the wealth of data already produced in regional and national Human Development Reports identifying horizontal inequalities in outcomes and opportunities,[113] and the development of greater disaggregation for the SDG indicators will make more data available. Quantitative data may also need to be supplemented with other kinds of data that assess people's experiences of exclusion or discriminatory treatment and to more precisely measure discrimination, such as perception surveys on experiences of discriminatory treatment or the collection of data on discriminatory laws (for example UNAIDS collects data on laws that are discriminatory in relation to HIV), or event-based data on hate crimes (even where these cannot be used for cross-country comparisons). The SDG indicators include perception indicators for discrimination (e.g. *SDG indicator 10.3.1: Proportion of the population reporting having personally felt discriminated against or harassed within the previous 12 months on the basis of a ground of discrimination prohibited under international human rights law*) (see Annex for more details).

In the United Nations normative approach, it is also critical to focus on identifying and addressing vertical inequalities between individuals, including the extreme inequalities that may threaten economic and political stability in different country contexts. Vertical inequalities include inequalities between individuals (rather than groups) and are not directly related to group-based status. These can include a range of vertical inequalities across opportunities and outcomes, for example, those related to income and wealth, education and health. In general, it is considered that vertical inequalities are less likely to produce social conflict than horizontal inequalities, but, as highlighted above, new evidence is now emerging to suggest that when vertical inequalities reach very high levels, they can also produce social unrest and can be a key factor in creating economic instability and limiting the sustainability of economic growth. High levels of income inequality also tend to skew the political and economic system, if wealthy and powerful elites capture the policy-making and regulatory process. A focus on vertical inequalities is thus particularly important from a normative perspective, given their implications for the realization and equal enjoyment of human rights for all.

Assessing vertical inequalities can also use quantitative and qualitative data. The SDG indicators include an indicator on income inequalities (indicator *10.1.1 Growth rates of household expenditure or income per capita among the bottom 40 per cent of the population and the total population*), but since it may not adequately identify the point at which inequalities reach high levels, these data may need to be supplemented by other measures of income and wealth inequalities (e.g. the *Gini coefficient* before and after social transfers, or the *Palma ratio*[114]) for a fuller picture of trends. It remains difficult to assess at what point income inequalities become too high, although some analyses have suggested that the tipping point is 0.4 measured by the Gini coefficient. Moreover, this will depend on different country contexts, but the precise number may be less important than the concrete impacts of this inequality identified in other ways (e.g. elite capture, or economic crisis linked to inequalities).

It may also be useful to measure data on "relative poverty" and to assess how many and how far individuals are away from the median income, because this suggests that that they may not have an adequate standard of living in the context where they are living. The SDG indicators already include an indicator *10.2.1 Proportion of people living below 50 per cent of median income, by age, sex and*

persons with disabilities, but it will need to be further disaggregated. United Nations human rights law sets minimum standards and thresholds below which no one should be allowed to fall, including "minimum essential levels" for the realization of economic and social rights.[115] The principle of "non-retrogression" also implies that progress in living standards should be continuous, and the commitment to use the "maximum of available resources" implies that resources should be ring-fenced during crises and in periods of economic austerity to protect the existing levels of rights realization, or at the very least ensure that the impacts of policy changes do not disproportionately fall on the poorest and most marginalized.

However, it is important to be concerned not only with those at the bottom of the ladder, but also with those at the top, and the gaps between them. A normative perspective is concerned with the relational aspects of inequality and the power relations between different individuals and between different groups, as well as with the social stigmatization that can result from an inability to participate fully in economic, social and political life. Capturing data on this relational aspect — through, for example, poverty data or data on outcomes and opportunities, as discussed above — is critical. Article 2 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights also prohibits discrimination on the basis of a number of grounds that include, *inter alia*, "property", which has been interpreted in human rights jurisprudence as income or wealth, and indicates that discrimination against the poor or less wealthy is not permitted.[116]

It will be critical to disaggregate data to reveal the situation of all categories of people and population groups, while putting in place safeguards against risks.

In order to measure and monitor inequalities and discrimination, it will be critical to disaggregate data to reveal the situation of all categories of people and population groups, while putting in place safeguards against risks. While there are a number of technical, resource and ethical challenges to expanding the number of variables for the disaggregation of data, the obligation of non-discrimination of Member States requires moving towards greater disaggregation with variables that are eventually aligned with the grounds of discrimination prohibited under national and international law. These grounds include sex, age, race, ethnicity, disability, language, religion, nationality, marital and family status, sexual orientation and gender identity, health status (including HIV), geographic location, and migrant, refugee, internally displaced person (IDP) or other status. Identifying those who suffer from multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination will also help to identify those who are being left furthest and who should be reached first in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and its SDGs. Monitoring disaggregated data will ensure that progress is being made in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda in closing the gaps for those left behind.

The purpose of this normative approach is to achieve formal equality as well as substantive equality. The legal concept of equality is not a simplistic concept (as sometimes understood or misunderstood) that implies treating all people the same, nor does it envisage a world without difference. Rather, it is a complex concept that requires both formal equality and a reasonable level of substantive equality of opportunities and outcomes across all population groups (i.e. horizontal equality).

- **Formal equality** includes the procedural rights that protect equality, including, *inter alia*, the right to equality before the law, the right to information, the right to participate in decision-making, the principle of free, prior and informed consent, access to justice, and the right to remedy.

- **Substantive equality** aims to address the horizontal inequalities between population groups that can persist even after formal equality is achieved, given structural disadvantages or different needs. This has been most clearly clarified by the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, which has emphasized that the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW):

> ...requires that women be given an equal start and that they be empowered by an enabling environment to achieve equality of results. It is not enough to guarantee women treatment that is identical to men. Rather, biological as well as socially and culturally constructed differences between women and men must be taken into account.[117]

Achieving substantive equality may imply "positive discrimination", including allocating extra resources to specific services, affirmative action or temporary special measures to take account of difference, structural disadvantage and historical discrimination. In the context of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, the "denial of reasonable accommodation" to take into account different needs is itself understood as a form of discrimination — a reminder that *to achieve equality, unequal situations may need to be treated unequally*.

It also requires moving towards achieving substantive equality of opportunities and outcomes for all social groups. Equality of opportunities means that every individual sets off from the same starting point, while equality of outcomes means that each individual or social group achieves a similar endpoint or outcome. The concept of equality of opportunities for all people is uncontroversial. Equality of outcomes is more complex: an approach grounded in international human rights standards does *not* call for absolute equality of income or wealth for all individuals. It does, however, call for moving towards equality of outcomes between ethnic and other social groups, for example, in education outcomes such as literacy rates—since horizontal inequalities in outcomes occurring between social groups may reflect discrimination. Indeed, many of the SDG indicators already adopted by Member States are outcome indicators (e.g. indicator *2.1.1 Prevalence of undernourishment* or indicator *4.6.1 Percentage of population in a given age group achieving at least a fixed level of proficiency in functional (a) literacy and (b) numeracy skills*[118]). It will be critical to assess progress on these outcomes with data for all social groups, rather than looking only at country averages or aggregates. With regard to income inequality, a human rights approach would not call for equal incomes, but would, rather, call for moving towards greater equality in incomes and wealth in situations where inequalities have become extreme enough to threaten stability, undercut democratic processes, and harm the realization of human rights, including the right to an adequate standard of living for all.

An approach grounded in international standards should also focus on achieving equity at the national and global levels. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights requires the creation of "a social *and international order* in which all human rights can be realized", and the Declaration on the Right to Development calls for "eradicating all social injustices", promoting "equality of opportunity for all" and ensuring the "fair distribution of the benefits" as well as eliminating obstacles to development at the national and international levels. This entails addressing inequities, barriers and structural constraints at national and international levels that reproduce structures and patterns of unequal development within and between States.

In the context of sustainable development, the concept of intergenerational equity, which considers the rights of both current and future generations, as well as justice in relationship between the generations, is also increasingly important. In the context of youth unemployment and poverty, and their role in protests and social movements, a focus on youth empowerment is critical.

Finally, the design, planning and implementation of programmes and activities aiming to combat inequalities and discrimination for the 2030 Agenda should be conducted in an inclusive manner, i.e. by fostering the free, active and meaningful participation of all key stakeholders in society, including decision-makers at all levels (global, regional, national and local), civil society actors, and scientific and academic communities, and by taking into account the role of a responsible private sector. To this end, human rights-based approaches to programming reflecting the principles of non-discrimination and participation are helpful, as endorsed by UNDG in 2005 and referenced in guidance on the preparation of United Nations Development Assistance Frameworks (UNDAFs).

V. Implementation: The United Nations System Shared Framework for Action

As set out in the CEB Statement of Commitment, the United Nations must put "the imperative to combat inequalities and discrimination at the forefront of United Nations efforts to support implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development".

The United Nations system should contribute to realizing the objectives of the 2030 Agenda and turning the tide of rising inequalities. This will require the United Nations to move beyond "business as usual" with a comprehensive and integrated approach to support the reduction of inequalities at national and international levels. It will require deeper understanding of inequalities and their root causes across all sectors of society, promoting policies that effectively reduce inequality and dismantle discrimination, enabling greater voice and participation of the most marginalized, disadvantaged, excluded or vulnerable groups, and facilitating more systematic tracking and accountability for progress to ensure that no one is left behind.

While there will be multiple entry points for United Nations entities to engage in this effort, in accordance with their respective mandates, the United Nations system will have a more effective impact by working together under a shared framework for action. The HLCP, as the principal mechanism for system-wide coordination on policy and programming, including for the system-wide follow-up of intergovernmental processes, has a crucial role to play in leading strategic policy direction, strengthening policy coherence across the system, and strengthening common tools to address this imperative.

This Shared Framework for Action thus sets out a common approach for the systematic integration of inequality, discrimination and equity issues into the United Nations support for Member States in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. It focuses on institutionalizing the United Nations' strategic commitment, supporting a comprehensive package of policies and programme support to reduce inequalities and dismantle discrimination, identifying common tools and methodologies for analysis and monitoring, as well as strengthening accountability for results. Under the overarching policy guidance of the CEB, the global thinking and policy coherence advanced by the HLCP will be operationalized and translated into country-level actions through the UNDG, respecting the different processes.

A. Institutionalizing the United Nations' commitment to equality

Addressing rising inequalities will require strong commitment from the United Nations system and from all entities to align their strategic frameworks, guidance and plans of action with this imperative.

A number of United Nations entities already have a clear mandate to work on issues of inequality and discrimination as a core part of their strategic priorities.[119] Other United Nations entities have worked to align their strategic and results frameworks for the next five years with the 2030 Agenda, focusing on leaving no one behind and combating inequalities and discrimination.[120]

Most United Nations entities have already made strong commitments to promote gender equality and end gender-based discrimination, including through adherence to the United Nations System-wide Action Plan (UN-SWAP) on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women under the leadership of the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women) and endorsed by the CEB. The UN-SWAP has greatly strengthened internal commitment with its indicators for monitoring progress within each organization and is now being extended externally for monitoring progress on the cross-cutting commitments to gender equality in the 2030 Agenda. There are also other system-wide strategic commitments, including the recent adoption, on 9 May 2016, of a System-Wide Action Plan on the rights of indigenous peoples, whereby United Nations entities committed to support the realization of indigenous peoples' rights in the implementation and review of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

A number of agencies have further adopted important internal policy guidance putting the imperative of human rights and equality at the heart of their work.

> **Example: United Nations Environment Programme internal policy guidance**
>
> The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) developed Policy Guidance on Environment, Human Rights and Addressing Inequalities: Integrating Human Rights in the UNEP Organizational Culture and Programmatic Activities. This policy guidance shows how environmental sustainability requires enabling legal frameworks, including the exercise of human rights, such as the rights to information, public participation in decision-making and access to justice. The objective of the Policy Guidance is to enable UNEP to integrate human rights and the core priorities of addressing discrimination and inequalities into its organizational culture and programmatic activities, including for its support for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda (for more details, see *www.unsceb.org/content/UNS-equality-activities*).

Every United Nations entity should individually and collectively consider how best to align their strategic frameworks, plans of action and policy guidance with this imperative in their work on the SDGs and the 2030 Agenda.

The HLCP can provide a space for reflection on meeting this objective at the collective level and can help generate a more joint and integrated response. The Committee should also play a role in guiding the system on this global policy issue, maintaining a regular scanning of rising inequalities and overall trends at the national and global levels as part of ensuring a collective response by the United Nations system as a whole (see also section VI on next steps).

B.   Policies and programme support to reduce inequalities

Rising inequalities are not inevitable; they are the product of the policies, laws, regulations, institutions, cultural practices, structural barriers, democratic deficits, and concentrations of wealth and power; indeed, they are the rules of the game that shape the economy and political and social systems. This fact was taken into account by the drafters of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. It is, in large measure, an agenda for equality. Member States have chosen to put the fight against inequalities and discrimination at the core of the 2030 Agenda, providing a strong mandate for the United Nations system to contribute to that fight.

If it is to serve this Agenda, the United Nations system must have a comprehensive package of support for policies, programmes and institutions that will help to reduce inequalities and dismantle discrimination. Thus, a comprehensive and coherent **United Nations package of policy and programme support** to combat discrimination and inequalities, and to advance the goals and targets of the 2030 Agenda including at the country, regional and global levels.

Country level

- Set up programmes to promote institutions, laws, policies and actions to **combat discrimination** on the basis of race, sex, language, ethnicity, religion, age, disability, caste, indigenous status,

health status, migrant status, minority status or other grounds, and to **advance equal access to justice**.

- Provide support for **reducing spatial or geographical inequalities between rural and urban areas and/or between industrialized and non-industrialized or remote regions**, including by promoting responsible and socially inclusive investments.

- Implement initiatives that **promote gender equality** and eliminate all forms of discrimination and violence against women, and promote investments to close the gender gap and strengthen support for institutions that promote gender equality and the empowerment of women.

- **Strengthen economic governance**, regulation, accountability and the rule of law in the economic sphere.

- Sustain **full employment** and inclusive economic policies, promoting decent work.

- Support the elimination of employment discrimination and **reinforce labour rights**, including decent work, minimum wages (including for migrant workers), freedom of association and collective bargaining, and the eradication of forced and child labour.

- Implement initiatives to combat all forms of age discrimination against older persons in employment and promote **youth employment and socio-economic inclusion of all ages**, and to address the vulnerability of young people to higher unemployment and lower quality of jobs and to longer and more insecure school-to-work transitions.

- Provide assistance for **social protection systems** that reduce inequalities through safety nets that maintain the right to an adequate standard of living for all. **Ensure support for universal health coverage** and universal access to healthcare to prevent catastrophic out-of-pocket expenditures that result from health costs that produce poverty and inequality.

- Establish programmes for universal access to **education, water, sanitation, healthcare** and other economic and social rights to promote greater equality in opportunities and outcomes.

- Provide assistance in achieving universal **access to ICTs** and the narrowing of the digital divide.

- Set up programmes to support **redistributive fiscal policy and progressive taxation** in order to reverse extreme concentrations of wealth, and progressively achieve greater equality.

- Provide assistance **for tackling illicit outflows and tax evasion**.

- Strengthen the protection of freedom of expression, association, and assembly, insulate **democratic institutions and processes** from elite political capture, ensure equal political participation for all women and men, and to promote public access to information.

- Create programmes to reinforce **private sector accountability,** including by implementing the *Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights*, ensuring the effective regulation of businesses

by governments, conducting **social, environmental and human rights impact assessments,** and implementing due diligence safeguards to prevent negative impacts.

- **Support measures to protect vulnerable, marginalized and excluded communities** in prevention and mitigation of the impacts of, and building resilience to, climate, natural disasters, desertification, land degradation and humanitarian crises.

Regional level

- Provide a **bridge between the global and national levels**, including by adapting and incorporating elements of the equality framework into regional policy frameworks and transmitting them to the country level, and inform national experiences into the global agenda.

- **Conduct studies and share best practices** to deepen the understanding of the multiple dimensions of inequality identified in this framework.

- **Develop indicators and operational guidelines** to follow up on the implementation of regionally or internationally agreed agendas at the national and local levels.

- As part of the follow-up and review of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, review, at the regional forums on sustainable development, the status of **implementation of the agenda for equality** and build on the experience and sectoral guidance of the regional commissions' intergovernmental subsidiary bodies.

- Promote **pro-equality public policies** as core elements of the regional development agenda.

Global level

- Promote a more **equitable global trading system** that addresses inequities built into existing trade rules, particularly for the least developed countries, and implements the principle of special and differential treatment.

- Develop a more **equitable international financial system**, including better regulation of global financial markets and of speculation, the equitable participation of all States in the institutions of global governance, as identified in the 2030 Agenda, and ODA to countries with people in the greatest need.

- Reinforce **national policy space** to promote inequality-reducing measures and to correct policy incoherence between intellectual property and trade rules, public health and human rights, including by implementing the TRIPS Agreement on Public Health.

- Cooperate in **transferring technology** to promote greater equality.

- Implement an equitable **international migration system** that recognizes the human rights of all migrants and refugees.

Many of these areas are already a part of the policy and programme support of various United Nations entities.[121]

However, there remains an urgent need to ensure that the United Nations system works together in a more strategic, coordinated and integrated way towards a comprehensive and coherent action at the global and national levels. This requires a common understanding of patterns of inequalities and discrimination in different global and national contexts, and focusing policy support and programming of the United Nations system on addressing root causes, while taking account of the comparative advantages/roles of each agency and building collaboration.

The CEB, through the HLCP, can play a role in reviewing the overall package of support that the United Nations system is delivering. It can identify gaps or problem areas, foster greater policy coherence and programme coordination, leverage the mandates of different agencies for greater effectiveness, and consider impacts in all countries, given the universal applicability of the SDGs. The United Nations system can then build on and operationalize these efforts on the ground in countries where the United Nations has a physical presence.

C.   Tools for equality/equity analysis, measurement and monitoring

This comprehensive and coherent United Nations package of policy and programme support will also require a system-wide approach to "leaving no one behind" and the sharing of tools for equality/equity analysis to determine patterns and monitor trends, to identify who is being left behind and why.

1.   Analysis

In relation to analytical tools, the United Nations system must build on and make more systematic use of existing tools and expertise in the analysis and identification of inequalities and their causes, learning from practice and investing in what works. It must also adopt new and innovative tools and methodologies, including for capturing the key elements identified in the conceptual approach outlined above in section IV, which should including the following:

1. **Adopting a common approach to leaving no one behind**: As highlighted above, this not only entails reaching the poorest of the poor, but also an analysis of persistent discrimination and rising inequalities within and among countries and their root causes. This is in line with the commitments of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the United Nations human rights standards for equality and non-discrimination. The approach should identify unjust, avoidable or extreme inequalities in outcome and opportunities and their root causes, including discrimination in law, policy and practice, structural constraints and unequal relations of power.

2. **Advocating and supporting greater disaggregation of data for all Sustainable Development Goal indicators** across a wider range of grounds will also be critical, including harmonized and standardized disaggregated data-sharing protocols. Member States already committed to data disaggregation in the 2030 Agenda, which calls for "high-quality, timely and reliable data disaggregated by income, gender, age, race, ethnicity, migratory status, disability, geographic location and other characteristics relevant in national contexts" (see target 17.18, and para. 74g); the approved list of SDG indicators also includes a similar introductory paragraph (see Annex). The United Nations system's position should support the expansion of the disaggregation of
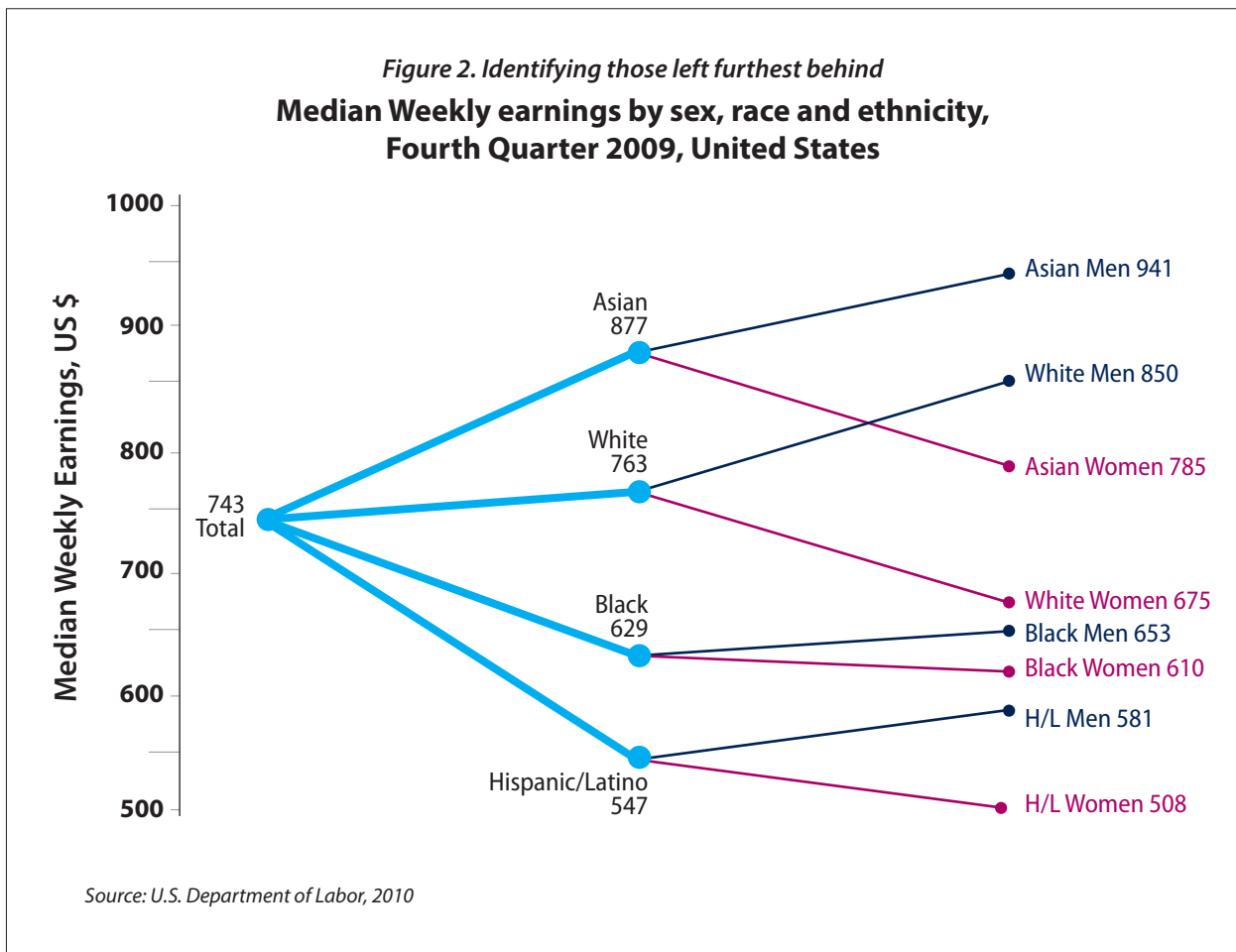
data, in line with this 2030 Agenda commitment, and in line with the grounds of discrimination prohibited under international human rights standards, while recognizing technical, resource and capacity constraints. In addition, it should promote harmonized and standardized data-sharing protocols.

3. **Adopting guidance on safeguards for the ethical and human rights risks of documenting marginalized groups**, building on existing guidance already produced by different entities.[122] This should take into account ongoing efforts to expand the disaggregation of data, including working with national statistical offices. It should also take into account the ongoing efforts under UNDG's policy support mechanism as well as planned UNDG-integrated country missions that will advise on aligning the national plans with the SDGs. Finally, it will also take into account UNDP's work in strengthening local capacities and national statistical offices to provide disaggregated data.

4. **Carrying out systematic analysis of all available disaggregated data and other quantitative and qualitative data collected on and by marginalized groups**, including data available from national statistical offices, as well as non-traditional data collectors, such as organizations working with marginalized communities, national human rights institutions, and local advocates and communities' own data. This should take into account efforts underway under the UNDG's localization of the SDGs in working with national and local actors,[123] and the use of existing analyses and data from national and international human rights mechanisms. It should further require the disclosure of information by national authorities.[124] Further, efforts are needed to ensure the integration of community-based data and perspectives from marginalized groups with official data from national statistical offices.

5. **Incorporating new tools for analysis of both horizontal and vertical inequalities as well as discrimination, stigma and exclusion, and equity issues** in order to understand the depth and extent of inequalities and discrimination across the economic, social, political, environmental and other domains, in line with the conceptual framework discussed in section IV of this paper. The SDG indicators already include a range of indicators that directly measure discrimination and many vertical inequalities, and disaggregated data will enable the measurement of horizontal inequalities (see Annex for a list of indicators relevant for inequalities). There may nonetheless be a need for supplementary indicators for a fuller picture of the situation of inequality. For example, the SDG indicators include indicators on income inequalities, but for a fuller picture, there may be a need to use additional indicators, for example, for measuring the Gini coefficient before and after social transfers and the Palma ratio. New measures of horizontal and gender inequalities, environmental inequalities and SDG localization initiatives with local advocates and citizen groups are also being developed, which can be used together with established tools such as the UNDP Inequality-adjusted Human Development Index and the Gender Inequality Index.

6. **Identifying the groups affected by multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination,** because they are the groups that are usually left furthest behind. Greater efforts will be needed to develop methodologies to analyse how multiple forms of discrimination intersect and compound in people's experiences of discrimination, and the challenges that this poses to achieving the SDGs

for those furthest behind (see Figures 2 and 3 for an example of one possible methodology that could used visualizing multiple discrimination and identifying those left furthest behind).

7. **Strengthening joined-up analysis of root causes and underlying determinants and drivers** of inequalities and discrimination, and identifying structural constraints in order to design the most effective policy and programme responses. Analysis of inequalities and discrimination should also be combined with other types of relevant analysis produced by all the United Nations pillars, including development, human rights, conflict, political and humanitarian analysis. The principles of humanity and impartiality require a strong focus on aid distribution without any discrimination, and on including vulnerabilities in humanitarian programmes and planning exercises. This would ensure that the most vulnerable are not left behind as well as equal access to assistance, services and funding to the most vulnerable and marginalized in responding. This should also examine new analytical tools that examine the dynamic processes by which people move into and out of poverty, how some people and groups are left behind, and how inequalities deepen over time.[125] These tools include time use surveys that show inequalities between men and women, and other tools that identify the impact on people of disadvantages such as disability. These disadvantages may lead to extra costs to adapt to a world built for able-bodied people as well the impact of discrimination, stigma and negative attitudes.[126] New methodologies have also been developed

Figure 2. Identifying those left furthest behind

Median Weekly earnings by sex, race and ethnicity, Fourth Quarter 2009, United States

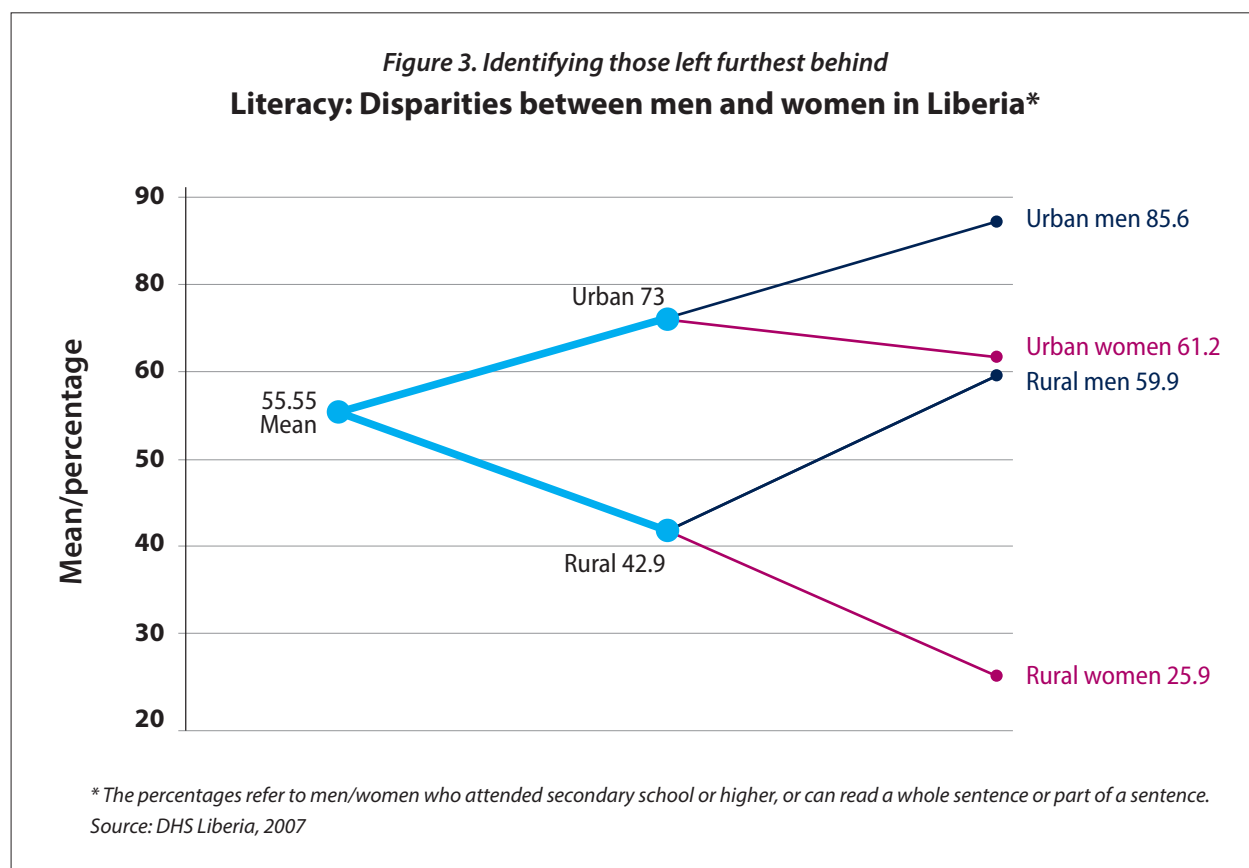Source: U.S. Department of Labor, 2010

to analyse inequalities in the chances of survival of children and adults, whereby the monitoring of progress in reducing inequalities assumes the analysis over time of these inequalities.[127]

8. **In relation to United Nations programmes, incorporating *ex ante* and *ex post* impact analyses** as well as social, environmental and human rights impact assessments in order to assess the potential future impacts of United Nations activities on the situation of inequalities and discrimination for all groups at the national and global levels. This would ensure that United Nations activities avoid exacerbating inequalities and that the situation improves rather than deteriorates as a result of United Nations intervention.

Many United Nations entities as well as a range of UNDG guidance materials already incorporate a focus on inequalities, discrimination and equity issues into their analysis at the global and country levels to identify patterns of inequalities and discrimination. At the country level, United Nations' processes, including the common country assessments (CCAs) of the UNDAFs, already review data on these issues. UNDG efforts to operationalize the SDGs, including under the Mainstreaming, Acceleration and Policy Support (MAPS) initiative, have produced guidelines for SDG reporting to facilitate the preparation of national SDG reports, revised the guidance on common country assessment for the United Nations system, and developed policy and operational messages for the integration of human rights into the 2030 Agenda. In addition, UNDG has an explicit mandate to ensure human rights integration across the work of its members and to facilitate coordinated joint programming by United Nations entities at the country level.

Figure 3. Identifying those left furthest behind
Literacy: Disparities between men and women in Liberia*

* The percentages refer to men/women who attended secondary school or higher, or can read a whole sentence or part of a sentence.
Source: DHS Liberia, 2007

The HLCP could consider reviewing the extent to which the United Nations system has adopted the elements outlined above in its efforts to support the 2030 Agenda at the global policy level while encouraging incorporation at the operational level through the UNDG's existing roll-out of the MAPS initiative and guidance materials.

Guidance on data disaggregation

Expanding the variables of disaggregation can raise technical, resource and capacity issues. It will be essential to consider the costs and feasibility of expanding the number of variables captured in nationally representative surveys, since more disaggregation variables will require a greater degree of data stratification, given the implications of either a loss in statistical precision and significance (if the sample size remains the same) or the need for a significant increase in the size (and costs) of surveys. Given the limited statistical capacities (and resources) in many less developed countries, this could pose a significant burden on Member States. It will thus be important to generate resources and to upscale capacity-building efforts, and also to consider **taking a staggered approach, prioritizing and sequencing progress towards greater disaggregation**[128] in line with the 2030 Agenda and the commitments of Member States in relation to the prohibited grounds of discrimination in international treaties.

In addition, it will be important to think beyond disaggregation to consider small-scale surveys and other methods to capture incidences and trends of discrimination, leveraging potential contributions of non-traditional sources and collectors of data (e.g. by working with civil society organizations carrying out data collection in specific domains with specific communities). Moreover, it will be important to think beyond nationally representative surveys and consider other appropriate methodologies and data sources. These may include the use of oversampling or targeted sampling techniques to capture incidences and trends of discrimination on specific groups,[129] and of leveraging potential contributions of non-traditional sources and collectors of data, for example, civil society organizations or service providers that carry out data collection in specific domains with specific communities.

Similarly, expanding the variables for data collection raises serious **ethical challenges**; for example, censuses often include categories that are inherently political and related to the distribution of State resources, and dominant groups often have incentives to obscure information. Also, the collection of some types of information can be viewed as divisive per se (e.g. Rwanda does not compile data on ethnicity because ethnic identification is seen as a threat to national reconciliation) Further, there will be a need to consider potential negative consequences for community relations in some contexts. Many groups want to be counted since it is necessary for inclusion in policymaking; however, there is a need for safeguards to protect people against potential risks, for example, taking into account implications for ethnic groups) There is a need to ensure the right to privacy, free, prior and informed consent, and the participatory principle of "nothing about us without us" to protect against the potential unintended consequences of documenting marginalized groups. A human rights-sensitive approach to data collection, analysis and dissemination should help to ensure protection against the potential misuse of data and invasions of the right to privacy. Lessons can be drawn from experiences of many United Nations agencies and countries that have developed strong safeguards on these kinds of issues.[130]

Example: A human rights approach to data collection and disaggregation

"A human rights-based approach to data: leaving no one behind in the 2030 Development Agenda", published by United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner sets out a series of core principles for data collection and disaggregation with respect to:

- Participation — Participation of stakeholders in data collection is critical, in particular the most marginalized groups or invisible groups or the organizations that represent them, including with the aim of mitigating any risks of collecting data on these groups, for example, indigenous peoples, persons with disabilities, ethnic and linguistic minorities, and lesbian, gay, bisexual, transsexual and intersex (LGBTI) persons.

- Self-identification — Data collection should not create or reinforce discrimination, but should always "do no harm", including by respecting personal identity and people's own self-identification.

- Transparency — Data collection must be independent, transparent and accurate, and respect the rights to seek, receive and impart information of people concerned, in line with the United Nations Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics.

- Privacy — Respecting the right to privacy and confidentiality of individual identification is also essential, particularly regarding the privacy concerns related to big data and surveillance, and strategies for preventing and mitigating data leaks or security breaches must be put in place.

- Accountability — Accountability refers both to *data collection for accountability* and *accountability in data collection*. In the former, independent statistics, free from political interference, are fundamental tools to inform and hold those in power accountable for their policy actions (or inaction). In the latter, state institutions and national statistical offices should also be accountable themselves to their human rights obligations in their daily exercise of statistical activities.

2. Monitoring of progress over time in leaving no one behind

In general, there is already a wide range of innovative monitoring methodologies and tools developed within the United Nations system.[131] However, the United Nations system will also need to integrate United Nations experiences and further build on these methodologies and tools to adapt them for SDG monitoring of progress in achieving the commitment to leave no one behind and reducing inequalities. Accordingly, the following activities should be carried out:

1. **Using and building on tools for equity/inequalities monitoring that capture progress over time** for the most disadvantaged groups in order to monitor progress achieved in the SDGs and to ensure that gaps, including gender gaps, are being successfully narrowed over time with respect to the more advantaged groups. For example, the World Health Organization (WHO) has developed a range of tools for health inequality monitoring, including monitoring change over time[132] and equity-oriented monitoring in the context of universal health coverage.[133] UNICEF has similarly developed tools for equity monitoring[134] that could be adapted for a range of SDG

targets. UNICEF and the WHO have also developed tools to monitor the progressive reduction of inequalities over time for SDG indicators (see Figure 4).

2. **Using and building on methodologies and tools to measure changes in horizontal and vertical inequalities in both opportunities and outcomes** in relation to gender, age and other group identities, such as race, ethnicity, language, religion or others. This would also include tracking budget implementation. These tools should also capture how changing trends in these inequalities affect social, economic and political stability by building on methodologies already developed for use in SDG monitoring (e.g. tools developed by IMF, World Bank and others). The UNDP Inequality-adjusted Human Development Index (IHDI) also offers data and a methodology on which to build.

3. **Supporting community-based monitoring and convening participatory consultations with all stakeholders** to assess the extent to which structural and root causes have been addressed and all communities and rights-holders reached. This could build on SDG advocacy and citizen engagement efforts as well as joint initiatives to localize the SDGs through inclusive, participatory processes. This could be achieved by using a human rights approach and by strengthening the participation of the most marginalized and excluded groups in monitoring processes, community-based monitoring and budget tracking at global, national, municipal and local government levels.

There are already a number of ongoing initiatives on improving monitoring, including efforts by the UNDG to produce guidance on SDG reporting and CCAs/UNDAFs. The Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA) Statistics Division, together with UNICEF, also organized an expert group meeting on data disaggregation in 2016 to review national practices and the current status of data disaggregation methodologies. The aim was to explore methodologies that could be used in national monitoring and the global review and follow-up of the SDGs in the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development.

The HLCP and UNDG can help stimulate greater sharing of tools and methodologies across the United Nations system and ensure that the tools adopted by the United Nations system for SDG monitoring systematically capture inequality, discrimination and equity issues.
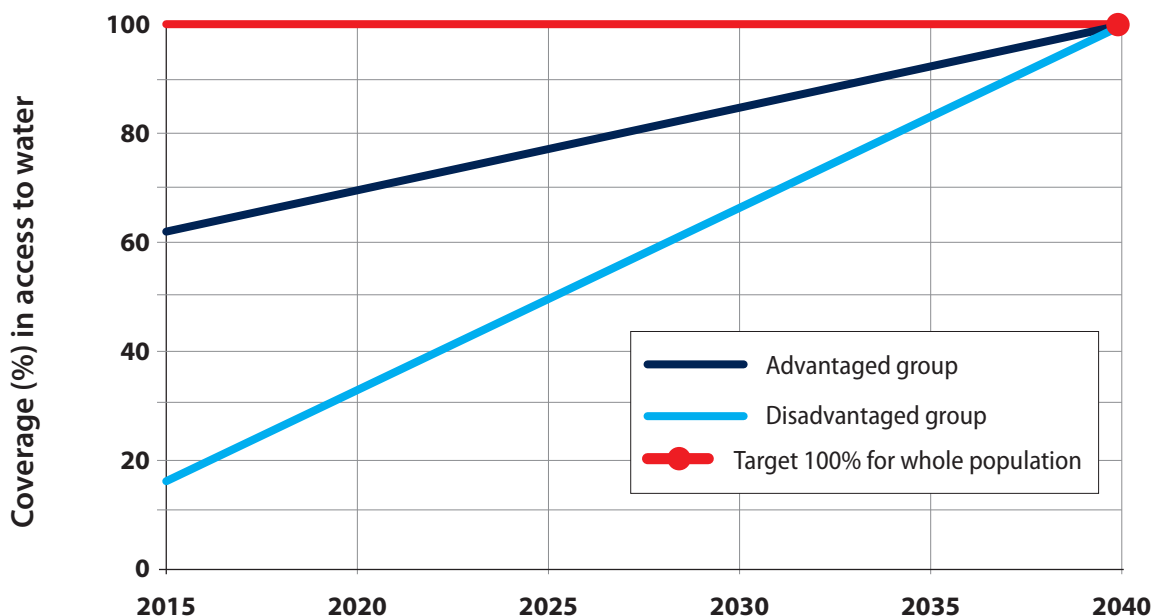
Example: WHO and UNICEF Joint Monitoring Programme Methodology on how to monitor the progressive reduction of inequalities over time for Sustainable Development Goal targets

In the context of water and sanitation, the World Health Organization (WHO) and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) with the Joint Monitoring Programme (JMP) for Water Supply and Sanitation have intuitively developed simple and clear graphic illustrations of progress in reducing inequalities, as illustrated in Figure 4 below.[135] This could be used to show whether the rate of progress of the most marginalized groups is on track compared to the most advantaged groups by assessing progress at interim periods, for example, 2015, 2020 and 2025. Regular monitoring at interim periods will ensure that the rate of progress is on track for all groups to reach the goals and will clearly show the progressive reduction in inequalities between social groups in achieving the targets. This approach could be extended for the monitoring of other targets, including those that may not have zero or 100 per cent targets.

Figure 4.
Progressive reduction of inequalities in access to water

Source: *Methodology proposed by WHO and UNICEF, Joint Monitoring Programme Process for Drinking Water and Sanitation*

Example: United Nations Children's Fund: Monitoring of Results for Equity System (MoRES)

MoRES is a programming and monitoring approach that was conceptualized in 2011 to strengthen United Nations Children's Fund's (UNICEF) efforts to address inequities and to make greater efforts to reach the most vulnerable and disadvantaged children. It can also be used to track inequities and deprivations in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) era. The MoRES approach strengthens existing planning, programme design and monitoring practices by emphasizing:

- improved identification and analysis of deprivations of children's rights and inequities experienced by the most disadvantaged children across the life cycle;

- use of a common analytical framework (i.e. the "determinant framework") that can be adapted by sectors to identify, address and frequently monitor key bottlenecks and barriers that impede results for these children;

- use of frequent monitoring data to inform timely course corrections in plans, strategies and actions at national and subnational levels and to inform policy dialogue on specific issues. MoRES consists of four interrelated core component levels: (level one — equity-focused situation analysis, strategic planning and programme development; level two — monitoring organization-specific programme implementation; level three — frequent decentralized/disaggregated monitoring of bottlenecks/barriers and use of the data for action; and level four — and monitoring final outcomes and impact.

D. Accountability for results

Accountability for results, within and beyond the United Nations system, will also be critical for reversing the trend of rising inequalities, and alerting governments and other actors when a situation deteriorates, with the aim of getting back on track, or changing track if necessary.

The United Nations system organizations will need to be accountable for their own impacts and progress at the collective and individual entity level in contributing to the imperative of combating inequalities and discrimination, in line with the CEB's Statement of Commitment and their strategic frameworks and action plans.

At the same time, the United Nations system can support the accountability of Member States, including by supporting the establishment of SDG review and follow-up mechanisms at the local, national, regional and global levels, and supporting States' reporting to the global High-level Political Forum review process. The United Nations can also use its convening power to encourage new and innovative forms of accountability.

The United Nations system also has a crucial role to play in ensuring that SDG review mechanisms engage all stakeholders, particularly civil society and marginalized people who may still be left behind, so that their voices will inform the process. Taking into account efforts underway in the context of UNDG's MAPS project, priority should be placed on the following:

1. **Ensuring that the Sustainable Development Goal review process and mechanisms at the global and national levels maintain a focus on leaving no one behind, monitoring progress in reducing inequalities and eliminating discrimination.** This should be facilitated by the United Nations system, which should contribute data and trends analysis on inequalities, discrimination and inequities (potentially in open access formats) to SDG review mechanisms. This should build on existing work with national government partners, human rights institutions, regional bodies and the United Nations human rights mechanisms in order to integrate recommendations from the human rights bodies into SDG reporting mechanisms.

2. **Advocating together with a common voice of the United Nations system, including through the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals Action Campaign, to highlight opportunities and challenges related to progress on and gaps** in combating inequalities, discrimination and inequities, including identifying who is being left behind and whether the furthest behind are being reached in efforts to implement the 2030 Agenda. This advocacy should focus attention on the most vulnerable and marginalized people and groups facing ongoing discrimination, exclusion and marginalization, and be grounded in the human rights principles of equality and non-discrimination in line with the Charter of the United Nations.

3. **Supporting the strengthening of a participatory approach to accountability,** by building on ongoing civic engagement and outreach around the SDGs, including through the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals Action Campaign. This aim would be to convene consultations with civil society, including women's groups, minority communities, human rights defenders and other stakeholders, and institutionalize their participation in SDG review mechanisms at the national, regional and global levels. This should include encouraging efforts to build

innovative and informal forms of accountability, such as social and gender auditing, user-friendly citizen scorecards, participatory budgeting, and promotion of the participation of rights-holders in local and national SDG processes, as already initiated under the UNDG, and building on the experiences of many entities.

4. **Capitalizing on a diversity of accountability mechanisms,** including ensuring that information gathered in existing mechanisms feeds into SDG processes (e.g. the information gathered in the existing human rights mechanisms and the ILO tripartite bodies). Accountability should also foster South-South, North-South and triangular cooperation and innovative dialogue among central and local-level governance actors to build accountability.

At the country level, national SDG review and accountability mechanisms are already being put in place in some countries, with the support of the United Nations country teams in drafting National Sustainable Development Goal Reports, with UNDP support.

Many United Nations entities have also developed new and innovative forms of accountability that are being adopted for a participatory approach to SDG accountability (see the UNICEF example outlined below).[136]

Efforts to coordinate United Nations advocacy and civic outreach have also been initiated through the United Nations-wide Sustainable Development Goals Action Campaign, which is working to give voice to citizens and civil society, and encourage them to engage in and monitor implementation of the 2030 Agenda at the local and national levels.

The HLCP should aim to reinforce the above efforts while maintaining an overview of progress and facilitating a collective review of the results being achieved by the United Nations system in meeting this imperative of combatting inequalities and discrimination.

Example: United Nations Children's Fund: Innovative forms of monitoring and accountability

- **Using real time monitoring information to strengthen accountability in schools:** Working with EduTrac, which collects real-time information on school enrolment, attendance, effective delivery of textbooks and school sanitation infrastructure, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) has supported the strengthening of accountability within the Ugandan education system. The system allows reporters — school principals, students and community members — to send alerts via SMS, triggering the mobilization of resources and actions to protect children from abusive teaching practices, speed up school construction and reduce teacher absenteeism. EduTrac has already generated a dynamic dialogue between the community and the Government, increasing accountability in over 3,500 schools with the collaboration of 10,000 reporters.

- **Using social media and community radio to build accountability on adolescent issues:** UNICEF support, media networks and community radios, for example in Indonesia and Nepal, provide space for young people to discuss the status of schools and social services. In countries such as Jordan, adolescents' participation in local governance has

(continues)

influenced local government plans and helped hold local governments accountable for delivering services for children and adolescents. Youth innovation laboratories in Kosovo and elsewhere allow adolescents to design their own solutions for social impact. Uganda and Zambia are using U-Report to hear the voices of adolescents and use this real-time data to influence policies.

- **Leveraging the impact of national human rights institutions for child rights:** National human rights institutions and ombudspersons are important mechanisms to support accountability and implement child rights on the ground. They have an existing mandate to monitor the actions of governments and other entities, receive complaints, provide remedies for violations, and offer a space for dialogue about children in society and between children and the state. UNICEF is working to establish or strengthen such institutions in a number of countries. For example, in Morocco, the *Conseil National des Droits de l'Homme* is collaborating with UNICEF to create and support a training module in the new training centre, which will enable all field-based staff to identify, report and report child rights violations to duty-bearers. In Peru, UNICEF helped build the capacity of the Ombudsman's Office to generate evidence on various issues related to child rights and to increase the coverage of their unique protection service specializing in children's issues within the municipal sphere.

Example: United Nations-wide support for Sustainable Development Goal implementation: the Mainstreaming, Acceleration and Policy Support (MAPS) Initiative

Efforts to roll out United Nations Development Group- (UNDG) wide MAPS support for Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) implementation include initiatives to support subnational/local SDG implementation and engage and empower change agents for inclusion, including:

Sustainable Development Goal advocacy and civic engagement

- UNDG efforts, under the MAPS roll-out, seek to leverage the SDGs to strengthen the voice and participation of traditionally excluded and marginalized persons, groups and communities. The SDGs lend legitimacy and visibility to local inclusive change agents, empowering them to be heard, inform and advance solutions, and hold responsible agents to account.

- The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) hosts the United Nations-wide Sustainable Development Goals Action Campaign, which strives to give voice to citizens and civil society, and encourage them to engage in and monitor the implementation of the 2030 Agenda at the local and national levels. One important aspect of this campaign is the My World 2030 platform, which collects globally comparable, disaggregated citizen-generated data at scale and nationally representative. It reports back on SDG progress, builds dialogue between decision makers and citizens in order to contribute a "people's perspective" on how to implement the 2030 Agenda at different levels, and monitors national policies and services that directly impact their lives.

- UNDG advisory and operational support seeks to build public ownership of the 2030 Agenda, including through a customizable multi-stakeholder toolkit on SDG awareness and public engagement. This will include: localized campaign materials; analysis of citizen perception trends; and surge support to countries undertaking common country assessments (CCAs)/ Development Assistance Frameworks (UNDAFs) to foster direct citizen engagement. Women and youth groups and those previously excluded, such as indigenous peoples and people with disabilities, will be particularly targeted.

Local/subnational Sustainable Development Goal implementation

- Participatory, community-level tailoring makes global goals more relevant and important to people. Local SDG implementation can thus: improve local knowledge through citizen tracking and big data, making it harder to leave people behind; strengthen intergovernmental coordination, making it more likely resources get where they are most needed; and enable local authorities to engage and respond to marginalized and excluded groups. The United Nations is well-placed to work with and empower local change makers and proposes to do so through the joint efforts of UNDP, United Nations Capital Development Fund (UNCDF) and others to support localizing the SDGs.

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(continued)

- Under UNDG's strategy to implement the SDGs via MAPS, UNDP is undertaking joint efforts to strengthen local capacities to improve the supply, quality and availability of disaggregated data. Information from national human rights institutions and the international human rights system will inform efforts to identify those being left behind, and track and report SDG progress.

VI. Next steps for implementing the Shared Framework

Unless urgent and effective action is taken to reverse the trend of rising inequalities both within and among countries, the sustainability of development, as well as economic, social and political systems across the world will be at risk. This would have implications for all pillars of the United Nations system's work, from development and human rights to peace and security. For this reason, Member States adopted a new development agenda that prioritizes more sustainable — and more equitable — development. The CEB also recognized this in its Statement of Commitment to "[p]ut the imperative to combat inequalities and discrimination at the forefront of United Nations efforts to support implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development".

This Shared Framework for Action aims to ensure a strategic, whole-of-system approach to implementing this imperative that is operationally oriented and fully grounded in the United Nations normative standards, and universally applicable for all SDGs in all countries. It calls for concrete action to meet this imperative by:

- institutionalizing the United Nations' internal commitment through their strategic frameworks;

- supporting a comprehensive and coherent package of United Nations policy and programme support to combat inequalities;

- adopting common tools for analysis and monitoring that systematically integrate inequalities, discrimination and equity issues;

- building accountability for results on leaving no one behind through SDG review mechanisms and innovative participatory forms of accountability.

Thus, the next steps for implementing this shared commitment and Shared Framework for Action should include the following:

1. **The role of individual CEB member organizations:** CEB member organizations should put the imperative and the core elements of this Shared Framework at the heart of their strategic frameworks, policy guidance and plans of action, as relevant, in support of implementation of the 2030 Agenda. CEB member organizations should also systematically include inequalities, discrimination and equity issues in their analysis, monitoring and accountability frameworks to ensure that United Nations efforts prioritize this imperative with a common approach to leaving no one behind.

2. **The role of the United Nations Development Group:** UNDG should consider how to operationalize this Shared Framework at the country level, including by integrating its elements into all UNDG policy guidance on SDG implementation,[137] including in the roll-out of United Nations support under the MAPS project and other initiatives. The UNDG should also support the strengthening of the disaggregation of data and facilitate the sharing of tools for the systematic analysis and monitoring of inequalities and discrimination. It should also consider how to integrate this common approach to leaving no one behind, including by strengthening participatory monitoring and accountability at the country level.

3. **The role of the High-level Committee on Programmes:** The HLCP should periodically review the strategic implementation of this Shared Framework for Action and the collective impact of the United Nations system at the global policy level. This should include strengthening the coordination and coherence of United Nations system efforts on the basis of this framework, and by identifying any gaps in combating inequalities and discrimination in the support of the United Nations system for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. This could be followed up by the HLCP's Consultative Group on Inequalities, co-chaired by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) and UN Women, and with the participation of interested HLCP member organizations. The HLCP may periodically transmit progress updates to the CEB, which may include recommendations for further action to be approved by the HLCP and endorsed by the CEB, as necessary.

Annex

Annex: Sustainable Development Goal indicators relevant to measuring and monitoring inequalities

Sustainable Development Goal indicators

(E/CN.3/2016/2/Rev.1, Annex IV)

Introductory paragraph on disaggregation: The list of indicators starts with an introductory paragraph on disaggregation, which states: "Sustainable Development Goal indicators should be disaggregated, where relevant, by income, sex, age, race, ethnicity, migratory status, disability and geographic location, or other characteristics, in accordance with the Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics (General Assembly resolution 68/261)." This paragraph reflects para. 74 (e) of the 2030 Agenda and should be applied to all the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) indicators. This will need to be supplemented to ensure full disaggregation, in line with the 2030 Agenda and the grounds of discrimination prohibited in international human rights law, and will need to mitigate any possible risks by taking account of a human rights approach to data collection and disaggregation.[138]

Sustainable Development Goal Indicators: Almost all the SDG indicators will also be directly relevant to measuring inequalities, if they are consistently disaggregated. Many of the SDG indicators are also directly relevant to combating discrimination and inequalities, including those below (*in an illustrative but not comprehensive list*):

Indicators on discrimination include all those in SDG 5 on gender equality and many of the indicators in SDG 10 are relevant, including, e.g.:

5.1.1	Whether or not legal frameworks are in place to promote, enforce and monitor equality and non-discrimination on the basis of sex
10.3.1	Proportion of the population reporting having personally felt discriminated against or harassed within the previous 12 months on the basis of a ground of discrimination prohibited under international human rights law

Indicators relevant for income and economic inequalities include, e.g.:

10.1.1	Growth rates of household expenditure or income per capita among the bottom 40 per cent of the population and the total population
10.2.1	Proportion of people living below 50 per cent of median income, by age, sex and persons with disabilities
10.4.1	Labour share of GDP, comprising wages and social protection transfers
5.4.1	Proportion of time spent on unpaid domestic and care work, by sex, age and location
5.a.1 (a)	Proportion of total agricultural population with ownership or secure rights over agricultural land, by sex; and (b) share of women among owners or rights-bearers of agricultural land, by type of tenure
5.a.2	Proportion of countries where the legal framework (including customary law) guarantees women's equal rights to land ownership and/or control
5.c.1	Proportion of countries with systems to track and make public allocations for gender equality and women's empowerment
8.5.2	Unemployment rate, by sex, age group and persons with disabilities
8.6.1	Percentage of youth (aged 15-24) not in education, employment or training

Indicators relevant for social inequalities include, e.g.:

1.a.2 Proportion of total government spending on essential services (education, health and social protection)

1.3.1 Proportion of population covered by social protection floors/systems, by sex, distinguishing children, unemployed persons, older persons, persons with disabilities, pregnant women, newborns, work injury victims and the poor and the vulnerable

4.5.1 Parity indices (female/male, rural/urban, bottom/top wealth quintile and others such as disability status, indigenous peoples and conflict-affected, as data become available) for all education indicators on this list that can be disaggregated

Indicators relevant for political inequalities include, e.g.:

5.5.1 Proportion of seats held by women in national parliaments and local governments

5.5.2 Proportion of women in managerial positions

16.7.1 Proportions of positions (by sex, age, persons with disabilities and population groups) in public institutions (national and local legislatures, public service, and judiciary) compared to national distributions

16.7.2 Proportion of population who believe decision-making is inclusive and responsive, by sex, age, disability and population group

16.10.1 Number of verified cases of killing, kidnapping, enforced disappearance, arbitrary detention and torture of journalists, associated media personnel, trade unionists and human rights advocates in the previous 12 months

Indicators relevant for global inequalities include, e.g.:

10.6.1 Proportion of members and voting rights of developing countries in international organizations

10.a.1 Proportion of tariff lines applied to imports from least developed countries and developing countries with zero-tariff

13.b.1 Number of least developed countries and small island developing States that are receiving specialized support, and amount of support, including finance, technology and capacity-building, for mechanisms for raising capacities for effective climate change-related planning and management, including focusing on women, youth and local and marginalized communities

15.6.1 Number of countries that have adopted legislative, administrative and policy frameworks to ensure fair and equitable sharing of benefits (of genetic resources)

16.8.1 Proportion of members and voting rights of developing countries in international organizations

Endnotes

Endnotes

1   See the opening of the informal General Assembly thematic debate on inequality, 8 July 2013.

2   www.unsceb.org/content/ceb-common-principles-on-2030-agenda-sustainable

3   A. Berg and J. Ostry, "Inequality and Unsustainable Growth: Two sides of the same coin?" IMF Staff Discussion Note SDN/11/08 (August 2011).

4   See, for example, M. Kumhof and R. Ranciere, "Inequality, leverage and crises" (2010). IMF Working Paper WP/10/268. See also the report of the Commission of Experts of the President of the United Nations General Assembly on Reforms of the International Monetary and Financial System, Ch. 2, paras. 122-124 (21 September 2009), which describes inequality as a cause of the crisis and noting that responses to the crisis such as bank bailouts may exacerbate inequality. See also the report of the Secretary-General *The role of the United Nations in promoting a new global human order and an assessment of the implications of inequality for development* (2012). A/67/394, paras. 13-14, which describes the financial crisis, financial globalization and deregulation as contributors to inequality and increasing inequality as a growing threat to economic stability.

5   See Laurence Chandy et al., *The Final Countdown: Prospects for Ending Extreme Poverty by 2030* (2013). Brookings Institute.

6   Key issues in this regard are illustrated, e.g. in Save the Children, 2013. *Getting to Zero: how we can be the generation that ends poverty.* London.

7   Branko Milanovic, *The Haves and the Have-Nots* (2011). Basic Books, New York.

8   Henk-Jan Brinkman, Larry Attree and Sasa Hezir, *Addressing horizontal inequalities as drivers of conflict in the post-2015 Development Agenda* (2013). mimeo.

9   Era Dabla-Norris et al., "Causes and consequences of income inequality: a global perspective". IMF Staff Discussion Note SDN/15/13 (June 2015) [hereinafter Causes and Consequences], p. 4.

10   See IMF, "Fiscal policy and income inequality". IMF Policy Paper (January 2014); *United Nations Report on the World Social Situation 2013 — Inequality Matters.* United Nations Sales No. 13. IV.2 (2014).

11   UNDP, *Humanity Divided: Confronting Inequality in Developing Countries* (November 2013).

12   IMF, Causes and Consequences, pp. 20-24.

13   Ibid., p. 16.

14   Ibid., citing data from Atkinson, A.B., T. Piketty, and E. Saez, "Top incomes in the long run of history", *Journal of Economic Literature* 49 (1): 3-71 (2011). See also Davies, Sandstrom, Shorrocks and Wolf, "The world distribution of household wealth". UNI-WIDER Discussion Paper 2008/03 (2008).

15   IMF, Causes and Consequences, p. 15.

16   See, for example, Bank of England, "The Distributional Effects of Asset Purchases". Research Paper No. 73 (12 July 2012).

17   See, for example, Ortiz, I., J. Chai and M. Cummins, "Austerity measures threaten children and poor households: recent evidence in public expenditures from 128 developing countries". UNICEF Social and Economic Policy Working Paper (September 2011), UNICEF Division of Policy and Practice; and DESA, "The distributional effects of fiscal austerity," DESA Working Paper No. 129 (June 2013).

18   UNDP, *Humanity Divided: Confronting Inequality in Developing Countries* (2014).

19   UNESCO, *Education for All — Global Monitoring Report* (2015).

20   Isabel Ortiz, Louise Moreira Daniels and Sólrún Engilbertsdóttir (eds.), *Child Poverty and Inequality New Perspectives.* UNICEF (2012), pp. 15-25.

21   For data on gender inequality and discrimination, see UN Women, *Progress of the World's Women 2015-2016* (2016).

22   M. Oelz, S. Olney and M. Tomei, *Equal pay, An Introductory Guide.* ILO (2013); *Global Wage Report 2014/15* (2015).

23   ILO, "Social Protection for Older Workers". Social Protection Policy Paper No. 11 (2014).

24   Claire Melamed, "Putting inequality in the post-2015 picture". Overseas Development Institute (March 2012). See also DESA, *Inequality Matters: Report on World Social Situation* (*2013*) ST/ESA/345.

25   ILO, *Global Wage Report 2014/15* (2015)

26   In recognition that indigenous and tribal peoples are likely to be discriminated against in many areas, the first general, fundamental principle of ILO Convention No. 169 on Indigenous Peoples is non-discrimination.

27   UNDP Independent Evaluation Office, *Evaluation of UNDP contributions to poverty reduction* (2013).

28   For an overview of the IHDI, see: http://hdr.undp.org/en/content/inequality-adjusted-human-development-index-ihdi

29   According to a recent paper by UNDP/UNCDF, inequalities can be clustered together as follows:

- Economic: These include inequalities in access to and ownership of assets (financial, human, natural resource and social). In addition, they comprise inequalities in employment opportunities and livelihoods. Underemployment and precarious employment constitute a serious challenge, with over one-third of the least developed countries' total employed population living in extreme poverty.

- Social: These include inequalities in access to a range of services, such as education, health, nutrition, and housing. For example, in 2013 more than 21 million children of primary school age were not attending school in the least developed countries. The proportion of unregistered births in the least developed countries is over 60 per cent, leading to potential difficulties later on in accessing education and health care.

- Political: These include inequalities in the distribution of political opportunities and power among groups. They also encompass inequalities in people's capabilities to participate politically, express their needs and concerns, and have their voices heard, as well as in human rights and the rule of law.

- Cultural: These include disparities in the recognition and standing of different groups, languages, customs, norms, and practices. See "Getting to the last mile in least developed countries: Why some are left behind — inequalities and social exclusion" (UNDP/UNCDF, 2016, Advanced copy).

[30] See, for example, Tapio Lappi-Seppälä, "Trust, welfare, and political culture: explaining differences in national penal policies". *Crime and Justice* 37(1) (2008).

[31] The most recent United Nations High-Level Panel Report on Peace Operations as well as the Peace Building Review and various Human Rights Council reports refer to exclusion and inequalities as contributing to and aggravating crisis, fragility and conflict, noting that underlining human rights violations fuel conflicts and tensions, and during times of conflict, generate displacement and migration. The entire United Nations system should therefore be involved in efforts to address inequalities in order to reduce the risk of conflict and humanitarian crises. This requires improving United Nations efforts to work across its development, human rights, peace and security mandate.

[32] See, for instance, A. Harrison, J. McLaren and M. McMillan, "Recent findings on trade and inequality", *NBER Working Paper* No. 16425 (2010), for recent evidence on this. For example, the rise of the South and the growing competitiveness of emerging market economies in global manufacturing value chains have led to the closure of manufacturing plants across North America and Europe, leading to a loss of jobs and income opportunities for low-skill, blue collar workers. Daron Acemoglu, Professor at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), estimates net job losses stemming from the rise in import competition from China at 2-2.4 million, between 1990 and 2011. In contrast, the growing weight of emerging market economies' transactions in international financial markets has boosted financial intermediation operations in global financial centres, such as London, New York and Tokyo, thus raising incomes for workers in these sectors. Thus, according to McKinsey Global Institute, in 2010, emerging economies accounted for more than three-quarters of the growth experienced in global stocks of loans held in the balance sheet of financial institutions, $2 trillion out of a total of 2.6 trillion, with China alone accounting for $1.2 trillion. Indeed, the rise of the South also offers new income opportunities for advanced economies and the possibility of offsetting these inequality dynamics. However, these transitions are not automatic and require active policies in areas such as education, skills and technology capability upgrading, or industrial policy formulation.

[33] Inequalities may be perpetuated by elites with little interest in challenging the status quo. Rising inequalities, particularly when they reach extreme levels, can further skew power relations since elites have more to lose, and the poor and marginalized have little access to decision-makers and public services.

[34] United Nations and UNDP did strive to enable national and civil society and government actors to implement the Millennium Development Goals in ways that addressed inequalities and injustice, including by adopting the Millennium Development Goals Acceleration Framework, supporting disaggregation, and empowering local actors to use the Goals to call attention to lagging targets and communities.

[35] General Assembly resolution 70/1: Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, United Nations Doc A/RES/701/ (21 October 2015), para. 14.

[36] Ibid., para. 35.

[37] Ibid., para. 13.

[38] Ibid., para. 35.

[39] Ibid., para. 10.

[40] Ibid., para. 19.

[41] Ibid., para. 18.

[42] These obligations derive, *inter alia*, from the Charter of the United Nations, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights, the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women, and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination.

[43] Transforming Our World: *The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* (hereinafter «2030 Agenda»), Preamble.

[44] 2030 Agenda, para. 3 and Goal 5.

45   Ibid., Targets 5.1 and 10.3.

46   Ibid., Agenda, preamble, section on "People."

47   Ibid., Agenda, para. 3.

48   Ibid., para. 8.

49   Ibid., para. 19.

50   Ibid., Target 10.3.

51   Ibid., Goal 4.

52   Ibid., Target 4.1.

53   Ibid., Target 4.3.

54   Ibid., para. 25.

55   Ibid., Target 4.5.

56   Ibid., Target 6.1.

57   Ibid., Target 9.1.

58   Ibid., Targets 16.b and 5.c.

59   Ibid., Targets 10.3.

60   Ibid., Target 10.3.

61   Ibid., Target 16.3.

62   Ibid., Targets 10.2 and 5.5.

63   Ibid., para. 26.

64   Ibid., Target 11.2.

65   Ibid., Target 11.7.

66   Ibid., Target 11.2.

67   Ibid., Target 15.6.

68   Ibid., para. 4.

69   Ibid., para. 23.

70   Ibid., para. 35.

71   Ibid., para. 8.

72   Ibid., para. 29.

73   Ibid., Preamble.

74   Ibid., para. 20.

75   Ibid., Targets 5.1 and 5.2.

76   2030, Agenda, target 5.3.

77   Ibid., Target 5.c.

78   Ibid., Target 4.5.

79   Ibid., Target 4.7.

80   Ibid., Target 5.5.

81   Ibid., Target 5.6.

82   Ibid., Target 8.5.

83   Ibid., Targets 5.a and 5.4.

84   Ibid., para. 27.

85   Ibid., Targets1.1-1.b.

86   Ibid., Target 1.4.

87   Ibid., Target 10.1.

88   Ibid., Target 10.4.

89   Ibid., Target 10.5.

90   Ibid., preamble, section on "Planet".

91   Ibid., para. 18.

92   Ibid., para. 3.

93   Ibid., para. 16.

94   Ibid., para. 4.

95   Ibid., para. 68.

96   Ibid., Target 17.10.

97   Ibid., Target 16.8.

98   Ibid., Target 10.a.

99   Ibid., Target 3.b.

100   Ibid., Target 10.b.

101   Ibid., Target 10.6.

102   Ibid., para. 48.

103   Ibid., para. 48.

104   Ibid., para. 74(e).

105   Ibid., para. 74(g).

106   Although the text of, "Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development", references national statistical offices, it is worthwhile to note that there are also important statistical offices in many ministries that should be targeted for capacity-building to be able to collect, analyse and report on disaggregated data, e.g. major data related to health come from health information system within Ministries of Health.

107   2030 Agenda, para. 76.

108   2030 Agenda, Target 17.18.

109   For the core human rights treaties, see www.ohchr.org/EN/ProfessionalInterest/Pages/CoreInstruments.aspx

110   See, for example, Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, General Comment No. 20: "Non-discrimination in economic, social and cultural rights (art. 2, para. 2, of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights)", E/C.12/GC/20 (2 July 2009); Human Rights Committee, General Comment No. 18: "Non Discrimination", HRI/GEN/1/Rev.9 (Vol. I) (10 November 1989).

111   2030 Agenda, para. 88.

112   Income inequality, as well as inequalities in consumption, wealth and other indicators of economic welfare, are often used to measure disparities in "outcomes". Some of the outcome inequalities observed may be explained by differences in individual effort and ability, but a significant proportion stems from inequalities in circumstances or, more broadly, in opportunities. Differences in access to education and in the quality of education received, or to health and other basic services, for instance, influence access to employment and income, and therefore affect the opportunities people have in life. Opportunities are also influenced by other circumstances that are out of an individual's control, namely the socio-economic situation of the person's family, the place where the person was born, and attributes such as race, ethnicity, gender or having a disability. See UNDP/UNCDF paper, "Getting to the last mile in least developed countries", Chapter 1, "Why some are left behind — inequalities and social exclusion" (2016, Advance copy) http://www.uncdf.org/getting-to-the-last-mile-in-least-developed-countries-migration see also United Nations-DESA, *Inequality Matters. Report of the World Social Situation 2013* (2013). ST/ESA/345; Andrew McKay, "Defining and measuring inequality". Overseas Development Institute, Inequality Briefing Paper No. 1 (March 2002), p. 2. https://www.odi.org/publications/2920-mckay-defining-measuring-inequality

113   For a collection of regional and national human development reports, see: http://hdr.undp.org/en/country-reports

114   A. Cobham and A. Sumner, "Putting the Gini back in the Bottle? The 'Palma' as a policy-relevant measure of inequality" (March 2013), available at www.socialprotectionet.org/sites/default/files/cobham-sumner-15march2013.pdf

115   It is important to underline further that the international human rights framework takes into account the availability of resources and the different levels of development of Member States, since the realization of economic, social and cultural rights is subject to "progressive realization" in accordance with the "maximum of available resources". However, the obligations of non-discrimination and the duty to give priority to achieving "minimum essential levels" of the realization of each right are not subject to resource limitations.

116   See Article 2 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights: Everyone is entitled to all the rights and freedoms set forth in this Declaration, without distinction of any kind, such as race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status. Furthermore, no distinction shall be made on the basis of the political, jurisdictional or international status of the country or territory to which a person belongs, whether it be independent, trust, non-self-governing or under any other limitation of sovereignty.

117   Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, General Recommendation No. 25 on Article 4, para. 1, of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, on temporary special measures, para. 8.

118   All the agreed Sustainable Development Goal indicators are listed in the United Nations' *Report of the Inter-Agency and Expert Group on Sustainable Development Goals Indicators*, E/CN.3/2016/2/Rev.1 (29 February 2016).

119   This is the case, for instance, of the ILO, OHCHR, UN Women and UNDP.

[120] For example, ILO's Strategic Framework for 2018-2021 will be aligned with the SDGs, and all ten of its proposed outcomes for the 2018-2019 biennium will target the inclusion and protection of vulnerable groups in the promotion of sustainable economic growth and decent work. UNICEF will continue its pursuit of equity-centred programming and policy work as part of SDG implementation and its new Strategic Plan for 2018-2021. OHCHR is already mandated directly to promote and protect human rights, including combating discrimination and inequalities. It has recently reoriented its existing strategic plan to take account of the Goals, including by focusing on equality and non-discrimination to support Member States' implementation of the human rights-based 2030 Agenda and the Goals. The New Strategic Framework of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) will also prioritize contributing to reversing inequalities by helping to eliminate hunger, food insecurity and malnutrition. The overarching objective of UNDP's Strategic Plan 2014-2017 is to "help countries achieve the simultaneous eradication of poverty and significant reduction of inequalities and exclusion". Human rights and gender equality are both outcomes and engagement principles. To align its geographically and thematically diverse efforts to deliver this objective, UNDP embedded Social and Environmental Standards (SES) within strengthened quality assurance, accountability and performance management systems. The SES require UNDP programmes and projects to substantiate and learn from theories of change that illustrate how its actions can/will significantly reduce poverty, inequalities and exclusion. They also incentivize staff to focus projects on vulnerable and excluded populations. The SES include specific programme guidance for standards related to Indigenous Peoples and human rights-based approaches, further strengthening the equality, non-discrimination and accountability focus of country programming.

[121] Various examples of ongoing activities by United Nations entities in this regard are available at www.unsceb.org/content/UNS-equality-activities

[122] See, for example, OHCHR, "A Human Rights-Based Approach to Data: Leaving No One Behind in the 2030 Development Agenda — Guidance Note to Data Collection and Disaggregation" (2016), available at: www.ohchr.org/Documents/Issues/HRIndicators/GuidanceNoteonApproachtoData.pdf

[123] Such an analysis can increasingly be undertaken in the context of ongoing UNDG support to national stakeholders to: construct SDG baselines; disaggregate data; set national targets; tailor national indicators; strengthen national statistical offices; and explore and strengthen possible sources of data and accountability frameworks to hold responsible agents to account. Learning and exchange across the United Nations system, including via existing UNDG mechanisms, are vital to build on what works and avoid what does not.

[124] In particular, national authorities could publish the appropriate tabulations with the necessary disaggregation, or provide access to public microdata for custom tabulation and secondary analysis.

[125] See, for example, UNDP/UNCDF, "Getting to the last mile", supra.

[126] See, for example, United Nations DESA/DSPD technical paper, "Inequalities and persons with disabilities".

[127] See United Nations-DESA, "Sex differentials in childhood mortality". ST/ESA/SER.A/314 (2011); "The association between two measures of inequality in human development: income and life expectancy". Technical paper No. 2013/7 (2013); "The Impact of Socio-Economic Inequalities on Early Childhood Survival: Results from the Demographic and Health Surveys". Technical paper No. 2015/1 (2015).

[128] According to the Secretary-General's report on strengthening the demographic evidence for sustainable development: "Monitoring the Sustainable Development Goals will require population data disaggregated by age and sex, race or ethnicity, migratory status, disability, income and geographic location. The three demographic data systems that cover the whole population — censuses, population registers and civil registration and vital statistics — can produce the required level of disaggregation provided that they gather the relevant information, geo-reference the data at the smallest administrative level or higher spatial resolutions, and provide access to microdata for the full population so that information for particular groups can be extracted" (*Report of the Secretary-General on strengthening the demographic evidence base for the post-2015 Development Agenda*, E/CN.9/2016/3, para. 72).

[129] The focus on specific subgroups is the only reasonable way to obtain a cost-effective measurement with all the relevant additional variables required to study determinants and address policy issues require to design and to conduct specialized surveys on these topics (e.g. post-censal, in-depth inquiry collecting causes of death using verbal autopsies or social autopsies to understand and address why children and women died and what interventions could be implemented to prevent such deaths in the future).

[130] OHCHR is engaged in working in this area, see, for example, www.ohchr.org/Documents/Issues/HRIndicators/StatisticsAndHumanRights.pdf

[131] For an overview of some important examples of methodologies and tools developed within the United Nations system, see: www.unsceb.org/content/inequality-monitoring-tools

[132] In its report, "State of inequality: reproductive, maternal, newborn and child health" (2015), The World Health Organization (WHO) introduced a methodology to measure inequality over time by measuring how fast or slow the situation is improving in the disadvantaged population compared to the advantaged population. Several examples and graphs are presented to simultaneously show the improvement in the national average and within-country inequality (e.g. figure 4.5). See www.unsceb.org/content/inequality-monitoring-tools for an explanation of the methodology; WHO, Handbook on Health Inequality Monitoring with a Special Focus on Low- and Middle-Income countries, 2013; A. Hosseipoor, N, Bergen and V. Magar, "Monitoring inequality: an emerging priority for health post-2015". 93 Bulletin World Health Organization (2015);

A.R. Hosseinpoor, N. Bergen and A. Schlotheuber, "Promoting health equity: WHO health inequality monitoring at global and national levels". *Global Health Action* (2015) Vol. 8, 29034.

[133] Hosseinpoor et al., "Equity-oriented monitoring in the context of universal health coverage", *PLoS Med* (2014) 11(9).

[134] See, for example, UNICEF, *Monitoring Results for Equity System: Evaluation Report* (2014). The Monitoring Results for Equity System (MoRES) is a programming and monitoring approach that was developed in 2011 as part of the UNICEF refocus on equity. It builds on the existing human rights-based approach to programming and helps sharpen the focus of programmes on the most critical bottlenecks and barriers that are preventing children, especially the most disadvantaged ones, from benefitting from basic social services, interventions and care practices. It includes an analysis of determinants or essential conditions required to achieve results for children and addresses the critical gap between routine monitoring of inputs/outputs and the monitoring of high-level outcomes every three to five years for improved management of results. In particular, MoRES aims to ensure that: (i) plans, policies and budgets are equity-focused and address bottlenecks that are impeding results for the most disadvantaged children; (ii) reductions in bottlenecks (and thus the effectiveness of services/interventions) are identified and periodically monitored to inform adjustments to plans and policies; and (iii) the impact of reductions in bottlenecks on addressing child deprivations and improving child well-being is assessed. Thus, MoRES is not limited to monitoring, but can also be used for effective programming. The MoRES approach is applicable to all country contexts, including low- income/high-burden, service-oriented settings and middle-income countries, where cooperation is focused on policy advocacy, and in both development and humanitarian contexts.

[135] See JMP et al. "Ending inequalities", available at www.wssinfo.org/fileadmin/user_upload/resources/Ending-Inequalities-EN-LowRes.pdf

[136] A range of other examples of innovative United Nations entity initiatives are included in www.unsceb.org/content/SDG-accountability

[137] See https://www.unsceb.org/content/UNDG-guidance for more information on UNDG guidance for resident coordinators and United Nations country teams

[138] OHCHR, A Human Rights Approach to Data, Leaving No One Behind in the 2030 Agenda: Guidance Note to Data Collection and Disaggregation, available at www.ohchr.org/Documents/Issues/HRIndicators/GuidanceNoteonApproachtoData.pdf

The United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination (CEB) advances coordination and coherence on a broad range of issues in the programmatic, operational, and management areas of work of the organizations of the United Nations system, in line with intergovernmental mandates and in response to Member States' priorities.

The CEB is chaired by the United Nations Secretary-General and is composed of the Executive Heads of the United Nations system organizations.

The CEB is supported by three high-level committees: the High-level Committee on Programmes (HLCP), the High-level Committee on Management (HLCM) and the United Nations Development Group (UNDG).

For more information, see *www.unsceb.org*

Rising inequalities across the world have become a defining challenge of our time.

Unless we take action to reverse this trend, rising inequalities will further deepen divides, stirring social unrest, undermining social progress and threatening political and economic stability. This could threaten all pillars of the work of the United Nations from development to human rights to peace and security. Development will only be sustainable if it is also more equitable.

Joint action is needed now. This publication therefore sets out a United Nations system-wide Shared Framework for Action for a more coordinated and integrated approach to combatting inequalities and discrimination at national and global levels. It seeks to put this imperative at the heart of the United Nations system's support to the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals. It is anchored in the human rights principles of equality and non-discrimination for all people, reflecting the values of the Charter of the United Nations, and the commitments of Member States under the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, including the pledge to "leave no one behind".

This Shared Framework for Action was developed jointly by UN entities through an inter-agency effort and endorsed at the highest level by the 31 United Nations system Executive Heads who are members of the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination (CEB). It identifies a comprehensive package of policies and programme support to reduce inequalities and dismantle discrimination; promotes common methodologies and tools for analysis and monitoring that systematically integrate inequalities, discrimination and equity issues in SDG monitoring; and advocates for strengthened accountability for results on reducing inequalities and leaving no one behind.

With widespread adoption, the Framework will help the organizations of the United Nations system, each utilizing their unique expertise, to work in a more strategic, coordinated and integrated way towards comprehensive and coherent action to combat inequalities at all levels.