

Innovative Pathways to Accelerate SDG Progress

**Leveraging Data, Enhancing
Policy Coherence, and
Addressing Transboundary
Challenges**

22 July 2025 | 8:30 AM – 10:00 AM | Permanent Mission of Malta to the UN | 244 East 48th Street | New York, N.Y. 10017, USA



Ministry of the Environment
of the Czech Republic



DEPARTMENT OF
SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT



DRAFT CONCEPT NOTE

Background

With just five years left to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by 2030 and just 17 per cent of the SDG targets currently on track, the urgency to accelerate progress is paramount. A crucial aspect of this acceleration involves not only addressing the national challenges and gaps but also addressing the transboundary impacts of policies and actions. According to the OECD, over half of the SDG targets (97 out of 169) hinge on effectively managing these cross-border effects ([OECD, 2019](#)). In today's interconnected world, actions taken to achieve SDGs in one country can ripple across borders, creating both opportunities and challenges for other nations.

The real challenge arises when countries focus solely on their domestic interests, sometimes unintentionally causing negative impacts elsewhere. These impacts can manifest in various ways. For example, policies on water usage and management can have downstream effects on water availability and quality in neighbouring countries impacting progress on SDG 6 (Clean Water and Sanitation). Similarly, trade policies can alter economic conditions across borders, and affect global trade flows, impacting economic growth (SDG 8) and poverty reduction (SDG 1) in other countries. Policies that promote high levels of emigration of healthcare professionals can lead to shortages in essential services in their home countries, hindering progress towards SDG 3 (Good Health and Well-being). Meanwhile, pollution from land-based activities can travel across oceans, affecting marine ecosystems and biodiversity in distant regions undermining global progress on SDG14 (Life Below Water). Addressing these transboundary impacts requires international collaboration to ensure that progress in one country does not hinder progress in others.

Enhancing Policy Coherence

Governments must intensify their collective efforts to enhance policy coherence for sustainable development. This entails equipping governance systems and strengthening capacities to better design, implement, and monitor coherent and integrated policies, and be able to identify and manage national spillover and transboundary effects, whether positive or negative.

By prioritising policy coherence and transboundary impacts, countries can foster stronger international cooperation, enhancing their collective ability to tackle global challenges and accelerate progress towards the SDGs. Without such policy coherence, unsustainable policy choices will make future shocks harder to manage, leading to greater poverty, inequality, political instability, and irreversible environmental damage.

Leveraging Data for SDG Progress

Innovative pathways to achieve the SDGs involve leveraging data to enhance policy coherence and effectively manage transboundary impacts. Data-driven approaches offer valuable insights into the complex interconnections between policies and their cross-border effects, enabling more informed decision-making. By integrating comprehensive data analysis, governments can identify synergies and trade-offs, optimise resource allocation, and foster international collaboration to address shared challenges. This holistic approach ensures that policies are not only effective domestically but also contribute positively to global sustainability efforts.

Objective

This side-event aims to bring together government representatives, policymakers, experts, and stakeholders to discuss evidence-based solutions for policy coherence for sustainable development, and the role of data in advancing SDG implementation, and effectively managing transboundary impacts of policies and actions. The discussion will focus on policy areas connected to the SDGs under in-depth review for the 2025 High-Level Political Forum (HLPF). Its specific objectives are to:

- Identify ‘high impact’ policy areas for accelerating progress towards the SDGs that would benefit from a focus on addressing transboundary impacts.
- Foster collaboration and networks to share experiences, good practices, knowledge resources, technologies and innovative solutions to address data gaps and monitor SDG implementation in particular to effectively manage transboundary challenges.

Expected outcomes

The event aims to support the United Nations and governments worldwide in accelerating progress on the SDGs. It will contribute to the evidence base and peer learning on governance mechanisms, policy coherence and data monitoring mechanisms to address national spillovers and transboundary impacts while promoting collective progress toward achieving the SDGs. Furthermore, the event will emphasise the importance of leveraging data and evidence to strengthen policy coherence, enabling more informed decision-making and effective monitoring of SDG implementation. Additionally, it will inform HLPF deliberations on the progress of SDGs under review in 2025.

Draft Agenda

(A light breakfast will be available and served at 8:15)

Opening remarks by co-organisers

- **Mika Poutala**, Minister of Youth, Sport and Physical Activity, **Finland**
- **Mary Beth Goodman**, OECD Deputy Secretary-General
- **Francine Pace Caruana**, Director (Sustainable Development), Sustainable Development, Office of the Permanent Secretary, **Malta**

Panel Discussion *(moderated by Louis Meuleman)*

- **Tomáš Taraba T.D.**, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Environment, **Slovak Republic**
- **Darragh O'Brien**, Minister for Climate, Environment and Energy and Minister for Transport, **Ireland**
- **László Borbély**, State Counsellor, Coordinator of the Department for Sustainable Development, **Romania**
- **Jamil Ahmad**, Director of the United Nations Environment Programme in New York USA (**UNEP**)

- **Pedro Saraiva**, Director, Centre for Planning and Evaluation of Public Policies, **Portugal**
- **Anna Pasaková**, Director of the Department of Environmental Policy and Sustainable Development, the Ministry of the Environment, **Czech Republic**
- **Anna Morat**, Director and Head of the New York Office, Sustainable Development Solutions Network (SDSN)

Q&A Session

Wrap up by the Moderator

Registration

Please register your participation here: <https://forms.office.com/e/HngAZkwveU>

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