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**World Lagging on Sustainable  
Development Goals**

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## WORLD LAGGING ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

### In Context

The recent UN report by the Sustainable Development Solutions Network (SDSN) underscores a critical juncture for global efforts to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by 2030.

The findings paint a bleak picture, with none of the 17 goals on track, highlighting the need for urgent and comprehensive reforms.

### Importance of SDGs

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are a set of 17 global goals established by the **United Nations in 2015**. These goals are a universal call to action to end poverty, protect the planet and ensure that all people enjoy peace and **prosperity by 2030**. They **helps in**:

- **Poverty Eradication:** SDGs aim to eradicate poverty in all its forms and dimensions, ensuring that everyone has access to basic necessities like food, water, shelter, and healthcare.
- **Environmental Protection:** SDGs address the pressing environmental challenges facing our planet, including climate change, biodiversity loss, and pollution. They emphasize the need for sustainable practices to conserve natural resources and mitigate environmental degradation.
- **Social Inclusion:** SDGs promote social inclusion and equality by addressing issues such as gender inequality, discrimination, and social exclusion. They strive to ensure that all people, regardless of their background, have equal opportunities and access to resources.
- **Economic Growth:** SDGs recognize the importance of sustainable economic growth that is inclusive and equitable. They aim to create decent jobs, promote innovation, and build resilient economies that benefit everyone.
- **Global Partnership:** SDGs call for global cooperation and partnership to achieve these goals. They emphasize the importance of collaboration between governments, businesses, civil society, and individuals to create a sustainable future for all.
- **Improved Health and Well-being:** SDGs aim to ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages. This includes access to quality healthcare, nutrition, clean water and sanitation.
- **Reduced Inequalities:** SDGs aim to reduce inequalities within and among countries. This includes addressing disparities in income, wealth, opportunity, and access to resources.

### Progress and Challenges

**Stagnant Progress:** The report reveals that only 16% of SDG targets are progressing well, while the rest show limited progress or regression. This indicates significant challenges in implementing effective policies and achieving tangible outcomes.

**Key Areas of Concern:** Several SDGs are particularly concerning:

- **Zero Hunger (SDG 2):** Rising food insecurity and hunger.
- **Sustainable Cities and Communities (SDG 11):** Inadequate urban planning and infrastructure.
- **Life Below Water (SDG 14) and Life on Land (SDG 15):** Biodiversity loss and environmental degradation.
- **Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions (SDG 16):** Declining press freedom and rising conflicts.

**Impact of COVID-19:** The pandemic has exacerbated existing challenges, particularly affecting life expectancy (SDG 3) and increasing health disparities. The disruption has also led to setbacks in poverty reduction and education.

### Leading and Lagging Nations:

- **Nordic Countries:** Continue to lead in SDG achievement due to robust social policies and environmental commitments.

- **BRICS and BRICS+ Countries:** Show some progress but are still behind leading nations.
- **Least Developed Countries:** Facing significant setbacks, widening the gap since 2015.

**Financial Architecture:** There is a critical need for reforming global financial systems to provide low and middle-income countries with access to affordable, long-term capital. This is essential for investing in public goods like education (SDG 4).

### India's Performance toward achieving various SDGs

- India's progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) is mixed, with advancements in poverty reduction, renewable energy, economic growth, and gender equality. However, challenges persist in addressing hunger, education quality, clean water access, climate change, and inequality.
- While initiatives like PMAY, MGNREGA, the PDS, Ayushman Bharat, and Swachh Bharat have shown positive impacts, further efforts are needed to ensure sustainable access to clean water, improve educational quality, reduce healthcare disparities, and mitigate the effects of climate change.
- India's commitment to the SDGs is evident in its various programs and policies, but the road ahead requires addressing infrastructure gaps, promoting technological innovation, tackling social disparities, and ensuring sustainable urban development.
- Collaboration between the government, private sector, and civil society is crucial for accelerating progress towards achieving the SDGs by 2030.

### Recommendations

- **Major Overhaul:** The report calls for a major overhaul of the current approach, emphasizing that "business as usual" will not suffice. It proposes a UN 2.0 model to enhance global cooperation and effectiveness.
- **Reforming Financial Systems:** The report suggests establishing new institutions and implementing global taxation schemes to generate the necessary funds. Shifting priorities towards investments in quality education and sustainable infrastructure.
- **Multilateralism Index:** The introduction of a new index measuring countries' support for UN-based multilateralism highlights the importance of global cooperation. Countries committed to multilateralism tend to perform better on SDGs.
- **Food and Land Systems:** The report stresses the need to tackle both undernutrition and rising obesity through sustainable agricultural practices.
- **FABLE Pathways:** The Future of Agriculture, Biodiversity, Land-use, and Energy pathways include:
  - ◆ Reducing overconsumption and limiting animal-based protein.
  - ◆ Investing in increasing productivity, especially in high-demand areas.
  - ◆ Creating inclusive and transparent monitoring systems to halt deforestation.

### Conclusion

The UN report is a clarion call for urgent and comprehensive action to achieve the SDGs. It underscores the need for robust global cooperation, significant financial reforms, and innovative policy solutions. Addressing these challenges is crucial for ensuring a sustainable and equitable future for all. The analysis highlights the interconnectedness of global issues and the importance of collective efforts in overcoming them.

### Mains Practice Question

[Q] Discuss India's progress and challenges in achieving the UN's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Highlight specific areas where India has made strides and areas that require urgent attention.

