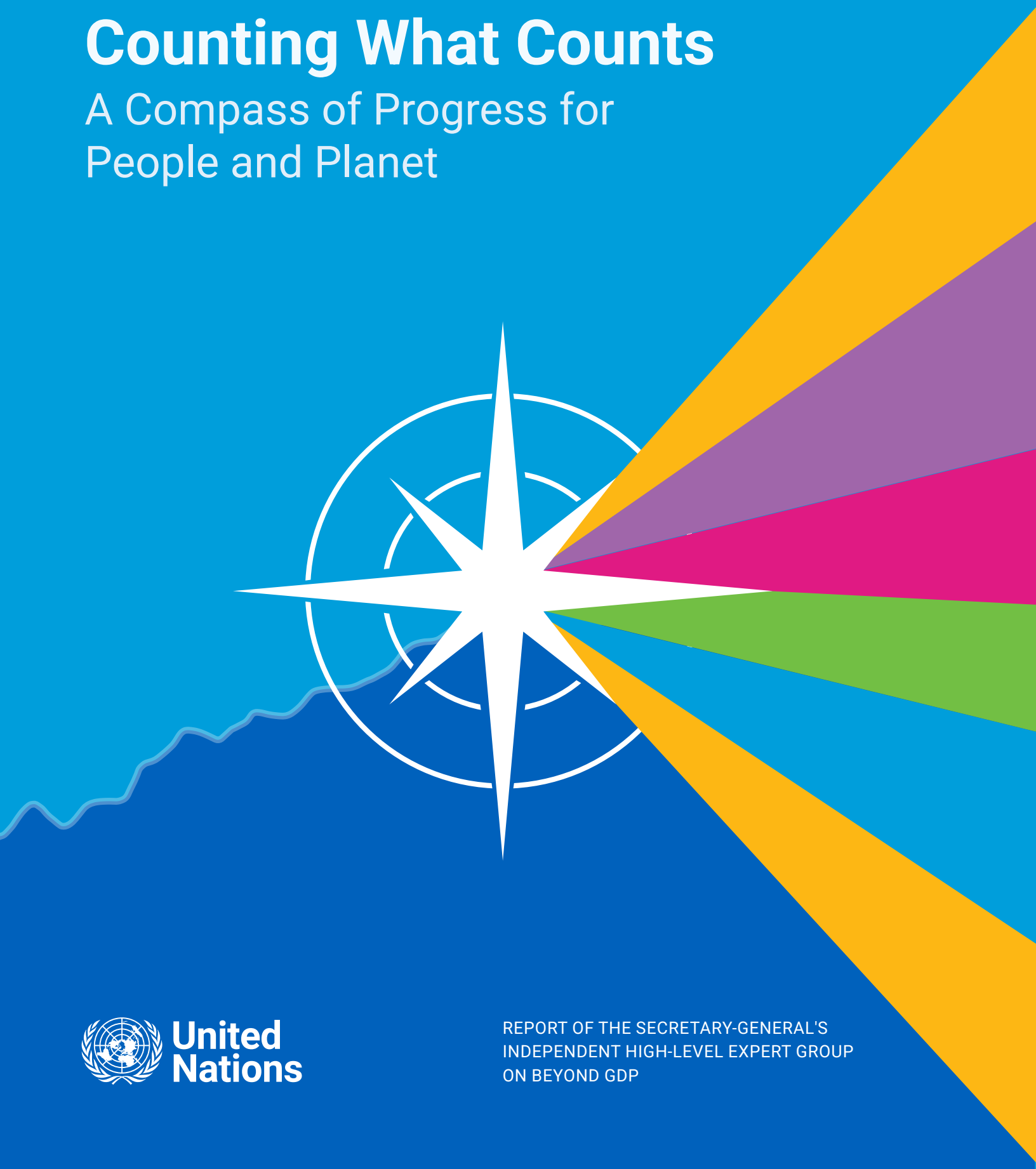
TD 526-20(1) TABLED ON JUNE 1, 2026

Counting What Counts

A Compass of Progress for People and Planet



United Nations

REPORT OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL'S
INDEPENDENT HIGH-LEVEL EXPERT GROUP
ON BEYOND GDP

Counting What Counts

A Compass of Progress for People and Planet

United Nations

High-Level Expert Group on Beyond GDP

In May 2025, following a request from Member States in the *Pact for the Future*, the Secretary-General of the United Nations appointed an independent High-Level Expert Group on Beyond GDP to "develop recommendations for a limited set of country-owned, universally applicable indicators of sustainable development that complement and go beyond gross domestic product (GDP)".

Disclaimer

The views expressed in this publication are those of the High-Level Expert Group and do not necessarily reflect those of the United Nations or its senior management, or of the experts whose contributions are acknowledged.

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Acknowledgements

We are grateful to (in alphabetical order): Sabina Alkire (Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative), Peter Benczur (Joint Research Centre, European Commission), Romina Boarini (OECD), François Bourguignon (Paris School of Economics), Jessica Cariboni (Joint Research Centre, European Commission), Arpit Chaturvedi (Cornell University), Pedro Conceição (Human Development Report Office, UNDP), Diane Coyle (University of Cambridge), Rita Da Costa (OECD), Carmen Diana Deere (University of Florida), Jan-Emmanuel De Neve (Oxford University), Jakob Dirksen (London School of Economics), Andrew Fanning (Doughnut Economics Action Lab), Francisco Ferreira (London School of Economics), James Foster (George Washington University), Pierre Olivier Gourinchas (International Monetary Fund), Rebeca Grynspan (UNCTAD), Francisco Guillen (National Institute of Statistics and Geography of Mexico), Andrew Haines (London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine), Peter Harper (Independent Researcher), Douglas Harris (Tulane University), Nicole Hassoun (Indiana University), Richard Heys (Office for National Statistics), Rutger Hoekstra (Leiden University), Dean Jolliffe (World Bank), Patricia Justino (United Nations University World Institute for Development Economics Research), Charles Kenny (Center for Global Development), Aart Kraay (World Bank), Kershlin Krishna (Brookings Institution), Christoph Lakner (World Bank), Richard Layard (London School of Economics), Santiago Levy (Brookings Institution), Luis Felipe Lopez-Calva (World Bank), John McArthur (Privy Council Office Canada), Graciela Marquez (National Institute of Statistics and Geography of Mexico), Matteo Mazziotta (Italian Institute of Statistics), Ian Mitchell (Center for Global Development), Salvatore Morelli (Roma Tre University), Serena O'Brien (Statistics Canada), Andrew Oswald (University of Warwick), Lant Pritchett (London School of Economics), Walter Radermacher (Professor hon., Ludwig Maximilian University Munich), Kate Raworth (Doughnut Economics Action Lab), Ernesto Schargrodsky (Inter-American Development Bank), Tharman Shanmugaratnam (President, Republic of Singapore), Michaela Saisana (Joint Research Centre, European Commission), Maria Emma Santos (Universidad Nacional del Sur), Rob Smith (Midsummer Analytics), Sergei Suarez Dillon Soares (International Labour Organization), Heriberto Tapia (Human Development Report Office, UNDP), José Pablo Valdés (World Bank), Kari Wolanski (Statistics Canada), Alejandro Werner (Georgetown University), Ernesto Zedillo (Yale University) Jorrit Zwijnenburg (OECD), and Josh Yi (Cornell University) for their insightful presentations to, support for, and engagement with the Group, as well as for their valuable comments, discussions, and contributions.

We are especially grateful to Benoît Decerf (Université de Namur), Koen Decancq (University of Antwerp), and Marc Fleurbaey (Paris School of Economics), for serving as key advisers to our work on dashboards and headline indicators and for their sustained and pivotal engagement in these discussions.

We appreciate the support for our consultations processes by the Governments of Costa Rica, Morocco, Philippines and Spain; the Regional Commissions New York Office; the Regional Economic Commissions; the Development Coordination Office; the Beyond Lab at the United Nations Office at Geneva; and On Think Tanks.

The HLEG would like to acknowledge the invaluable support and contributions made to this effort by the Inter-Agency Secretariat supporting our work, which included everything from logistics to research and technical support. The Secretariat also contributed to the many drafts of the report. While those reflected the different views and priorities of the Group, we benefited a great deal from the strong writing and editorial skills that the Secretariat brought to the table. We thank Alexander Blackburn, Elena de Jesús, Ricardo Fuentes Nieva, Daniel Hopp, Vincent Stueber as well as Laurence Chandy, George Gray Molina, Amr Nour, Anu Peltola, and Stefan Schweinfest. We also valued the support from other UN staff and affiliates, including Youlia Antonova, Therese Bjork, Lara Blanco, Ekaterina Chernova, Theo Servulo Da Cunha Aldrighi, Ashebir Desalegn Mengesha, Samhita Dulam, Hadiza Elayo, Karima El Korri, Nicolas Fasel, Marcella Favretto, Thilmeeza Hussain, Isobel Laughton, Chiara Mariotti, Monica Morrica, Benjamin Neil Sanchez, Max Oliver Field, Leonardo Rueda Gil, Predrag Savic, Maria Sinka, Assan Touray and Fiona Willis Nunez.

We thank Ziad al-Kadri, Ashley Caja, Yasmin Hamed, and Nadege Hadjemian for production and editorial support.

We are also grateful to the Deputy Secretary-General, Ms. Amina Mohammed, for her leadership and guidance for our work.

Finally, we would like to thank the UN Secretary-General, Mr. Antonio Guterres, for entrusting us with this mandate and his steadfast support throughout this process.

While we have benefited greatly from the insights and advice of those acknowledged above, they are not responsible for the views expressed herein. Any errors, interpretations or remaining shortcomings are entirely the High-Level Expert Group's responsibility.

This work was made possible through the project "Beyond GDP: Advancing global and national initiatives to develop, compile and integrate beyond-GDP metrics to foster inclusive, sustainable, and forward-thinking policymaking" with financial support from the United Nations Peace and Development Trust Fund.

Executive Summary

For decades, Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and its growth have been treated as the closest thing the world has to a measure of progress. Yet GDP growth has coexisted with persistent inequality, environmental degradation, and declining trust in public institutions. GDP is an indispensable measure of economic activity, but it was never designed to capture the full range of outcomes that shape people's lives. We have come to expect answers from it that it was never designed to give.

This report is a response to that gap. In May 2025, the Secretary-General appointed an independent High-Level Expert Group on Beyond GDP to develop recommendations for a limited set of country-owned, universally applicable indicators of sustainable development that complement and go beyond GDP. This represents the first time the United Nations has developed a proposal of this nature explicitly in response to a request from Member States. The Group's response draws on decades of research and on national and international efforts to measure progress, including work undertaken in the context of the Sustainable Development Goals, promoting convergence of past and ongoing initiatives. It proposes global norms for measuring progress beyond GDP, and a clear, practical implementation agenda: a conceptual framework, a dashboard of indicators, avenues for future headline indicators, and priorities for statistical development, research, and national uptake.

At the heart of the framework lies the well-being of people and planet under one organizing principle: that progress means equitable, inclusive, and sustainable well-being. It is multidimensional and intergenerational in scope, recognizing that well-being depends on economic, social, institutional, and environmental conditions — and on how sustainable those conditions are over time.

The report proposes a dashboard of 31 indicators structured around four components. The first is foundational principles — peace, human rights, and respect for the planet — captured through a limited set of indicators, complemented by normative commitments and institutional safeguards. The second is current well-being, measured across domains that reflect people's lived experiences: material conditions and work, health, education, security, subjective well-being, social cohesion, quality of institutions and environmental quality. The third is equity and inclusion, treated as a cross-cutting dimension and assessed through indicators of inequality, poverty, and disparities across population groups — including overlapping deprivations, with space for country-specific dimensions where relevant. The fourth is sustainability and resilience, which connects present outcomes to future well-being through the measurement of key forms of capital: produced, human, social, institutional and natural. Together, these four components map the conditions a society needs not just to function today, but to hold together over time.

The dashboard builds on what already exists: a deliberate choice that lowers the barrier to action. Close to half of its indicators are drawn directly from the SDGs, which means most countries have the data, the systems, and the experience to begin without delay. It goes further, incorporating measures for dimensions of progress — social cohesion, subjective well-being, and institutional quality — that have historically been overlooked or

poorly tracked. And because a detailed dashboard is not always the most effective tool for public communication or high-level decision-making, the report also recommends developing a small number of headline indicators that capture where things stand and are accessible to decision-makers and the public alike.

The value of any measurement framework lies entirely in whether and how it is used. The implementation agenda set out in this report — covering statistical development, national adoption, and international coordination — can begin immediately. Over time, it will require sustained investment in statistical systems, improvements in data availability and timeliness, and continued methodological work. And, most importantly, it will require sustained political commitment. The upcoming intergovernmental process will be a decisive opportunity to set global norms and build this commitment.

The report also sets out what each constituency must do to bring this agenda to life. For **Governments**, the task is manifold. Crucially, establish and regularly publish country-owned progress dashboards grounded in this framework, adapted to national priorities and expanded to reflect additional equity dimensions, and embed them in the core processes of policy, planning, budgeting, and accountability. In addition, strengthen the statistical infrastructure that makes measurement possible, including the legal mandates of National Statistical Offices and the systems that produce timely and disaggregated data, and enable them to rapidly adopt measurement of frontier areas of well-being.

For the **UN system and international organizations**, the priorities are equally clear. An annual Beyond GDP global progress report, applying the framework to all countries and aligned with SDG reporting, would create the shared baseline that national efforts require. Coordination mechanisms to channel financial and technical support to national implementation would ensure that ambition does not outrun capacity. And the integration of well-being, equity, sustainability, and cross-border spillovers into development cooperation, financing decisions, and country classifications would embed this agenda where decisions are made. Efforts should also be made to advance the design, testing, and roll-out of headline aggregate indicators.

The **international statistical community** has its own distinct role. Under the UN Statistical Commission, it should maintain and periodically refine the dashboard and develop methodological guidance for each indicator — including guidance specifically calibrated for disaggregation and use in low-capacity settings, where the need is greatest and the tools are thinnest. It should fast-track work on the frontier areas where measurement remains weakest. The community should also collaborate with experts in the field to develop common standards for capital and comprehensive wealth accounting, as well as measures for cross-border spillovers.

Beyond Governments and statistical institutions, this agenda depends on a **wider group of actors**. Academia and civil society should drive innovation in measurement — including through citizen-generated data — and provide the independent monitoring and analysis of progress, trade-offs, and distributional impacts that official statistics cannot always supply. Alongside the private sector and the media, these groups have a crucial role to play in shaping public discourse and sustaining this agenda.

What we measure shapes what we value. This report does not ask the world to abandon GDP. It asks something more ambitious: to look at the full picture, and to act accordingly.

CHAPTER

1

Counting What Counts:

The Urgent Need for a New Compass

1. For several decades, Gross Domestic Product (GDP) has been the primary metric used to guide policy decisions. Originally designed to measure the changing scale of aggregate economic activity, it has slowly become a proxy for overall societal well-being. Policymakers rely on it to allocate resources, identify recessions and expansions, and benchmark national performance. International organizations use it to compare and group countries; financial markets use it to gauge economic prospects; and the media and the public use it as the ultimate shorthand for progress. GDP has become, in short, the number by which the world judges itself.

2. Yet warnings against using GDP as a broad measure of progress have existed for decades. Notably, one of the architects of national income accounting, Nobel laureate Simon Kuznets, observed several decades ago: *"The welfare of a nation can scarcely be inferred from a measurement of national income."* In 2009, the Stiglitz-Sen-Fitoussi Report argued that *"the time is ripe for our measurement system to shift emphasis from measuring economic production to measuring people's well-being. And measures of well-being should be put in a context of sustainability."*

3. This is not an argument for rejecting GDP outright, as its track record speaks for itself. The expansion of economic output has enabled governments to invest in health systems, schools, infrastructure, and security. GDP growth has indirectly contributed to longer lives, lower infant mortality, and higher educational attainment. The question is not whether GDP has done useful work, rather, it is whether GDP alone remains the right instrument to measure what we value.

4. The push to measure what GDP misses has been building over decades, driven by a growing recognition that societies were becoming too complex and interconnected to be read through a single number tracking economic activity. At the same time, the world has faced a succession of destabilizing shocks and mounting structural pressures: from financial crises and the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic to escalating environmental threats, rising inequalities, geopolitical tensions, democratic erosion and rapid technological change.

5. These pressures are not a list of separate concerns. They interact, compound, and feed one another — and they expose, with growing clarity, what GDP cannot see.

6. Take technology. It has long been a powerful driver of economic transformation, productivity growth, improved health and expanded access to information. Without the right institutions, regulation and public policy, however, it can displace workers, exclude segments of the population, concentrate economic and political power, and erode privacy. History offers a cautionary tale: the Industrial Revolution ultimately raised average incomes, but it was also accompanied by decades of living standards that stagnated for many, working conditions that deteriorated, and social protections that lagged behind economic change. Artificial intelligence may be writing the next chapter of that same story. On one side of the ledger: the promise of significantly faster productivity growth. On the other: the prospect of mass unemployment and the proliferation of new weapons. These two scenarios, which are not mutually exclusive, show that to judge the merit of artificial intelligence to society by its contribution to GDP alone would be myopic.

7. Technology is also fundamentally reshaping the architecture of value itself. Value creation has shifted toward intangible assets, such as data, software, and intellectual property, and a growing share of economic activity takes the form of zero-price digital services and user co-production that traditional market-transaction measures struggle to capture. While statistical frameworks such as the 2025 System of National Accounts (SNA) are adapting, it will take years to implement changes, and still, much of this value will sit outside headline GDP and the main accounts. Moreover, our economies do not stop at borders. Global value chains and mobile capital have loosened the link between economic activity and national territory, with production inputs counted in one country, revenues booked in another as multinationals shift intangibles and profits across jurisdictions. The same interdependence amplifies risks and spillovers — from financial contagion, potential illicit financial flows, and supply chain disruptions to energy dependency and transport shocks.

8. Inequality, meanwhile, is corroding politics, societies, and economies. Concentrated wealth has become concentrated power, quietly limiting the voice of ordinary people, funding the control of media outlets and undermining democratic institutions. Vast private fortunes have become political forces in their own right, deepening a crisis of legitimacy worldwide and fueling a narrative that governments work on behalf of a small group of wealthy elites. For many people it is not just a narrative but an everyday reality.

9. The environmental picture is no less stark. Global greenhouse gas emissions remain far above levels necessary to limit dangerous climate change, and the climate ambitions, including those to limit global mean temperature increase to 1.5 degrees Celsius, set earlier in the century are unlikely to be met. While economic growth and carbon emissions have decoupled in

parts of the world, this has not occurred at the speed or scale required to avert severe environmental and social consequences. Each passing year makes the evidence harder to set aside. Extreme heat, floods, droughts, wildfires and rising sea levels are no longer distant risks that scientists model in reports. They are the daily reality of hundreds of millions of people — and the number is growing. Moreover, climate change is just one of several deepening environmental pressures bearing down on the planet.

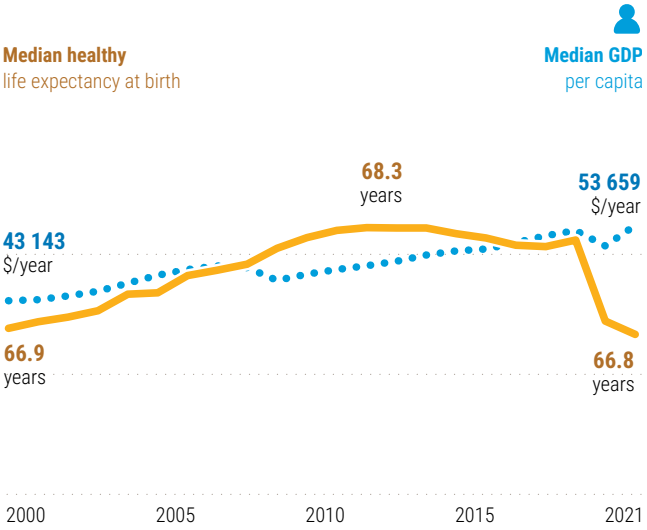
10. The response to all these trends is visible and growing. Many countries are experiencing a surge in public dissatisfaction — manifested in social unrest, youth protests and disengagement from civic life, and declining trust in governments and public institutions. Growing geopolitical fractures and armed conflicts add to a pervasive sense of instability, uncertainty, and insecurity. What has emerged is not merely frustration, but a rupture between what governments pursue as policy objectives and what citizens perceive as meaningful progress.

11. What makes this moment particularly striking is the paradox at its centre: despite the continued growth of the global economy, global risks and grievances are mounting. Between 1980 and 2025, global economic activity contracted only in 2009 (during the global financial crisis) and 2020 (during the COVID-19 pandemic). Economic expansion has repeatedly coexisted with heightened anxiety about jobs, environmental stability, health, social cohesion and the reliability of public institutions (see Figure 1). GDP growth and public sentiment have come apart. People increasingly believe their governments cannot meet their needs, and that the economic and political system is rigged toward the ultrawealthy — and no positive headline growth figure changes that view. A measure that so consistently fails to reflect how people experience their lives has stopped being a reliable guide.

12. The conclusion is clear: continuing on this path risks a future in which global economic output continues to grow while societies become mired in deeper and more persistent environmental, social and political crises. A narrow focus on economic output will keep delaying action on long-term risks and keep prioritizing short-term economic gains over the broader well-being of people and the planet. The cost will be borne by future generations, and by the planet itself.

Figure 1: Trends of key dimensions of progress compared to GDP

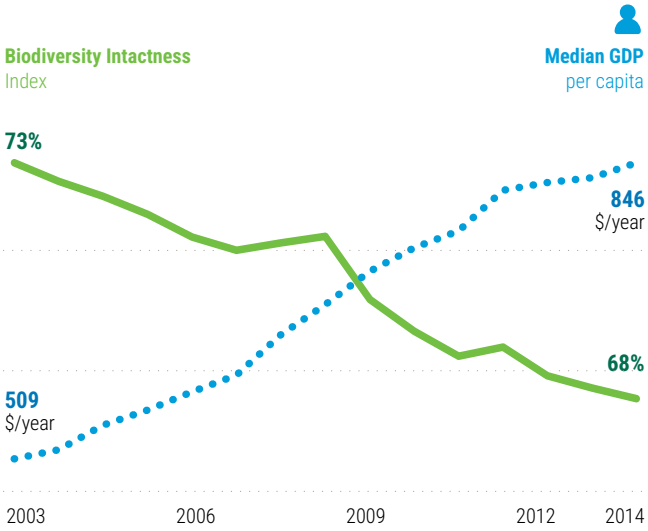
HEALTH
NORTHERN AMERICA



Source: World Bank and WHO

Despite strong GDP growth between 2000 and 2020 in Northern America, median healthy life expectancy in that region began to stagnate in the early 2010s, beginning to decline even before the COVID-19 pandemic.

ENVIRONMENT
EASTERN AFRICA



Source: World Bank and The Natural History Museum, London

Eastern Africa has seen continuing rates of biodiversity loss and ecological damage despite consistent per capita GDP growth.

CHAPTER
2

Approach of the High-Level Expert Group

13. With this report, we, the High-Level Expert Group on Beyond GDP (see Box 1), aim to help to refine the definition of progress in the twenty-first century and provide a new compass for better, fairer and more sustainable decision-making. In doing so, we seek to make the invisible visible by measuring neglected or hidden issues, such as environmental degradation, domestic violence and unpaid care work. We also look to give voice to the voiceless by valuing people's well-being, regardless of their economic output, and ensuring that the needs of future generations are considered.

14. We based our work on many important initiatives undertaken previously, including the seminal Report of the World Commission on Environment and Development: Our Common Future (the Brundtland report), in which the concept of sustainable development was introduced, the international statistical community's efforts to monitor progress on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the many national and international well-being frameworks from which we drew inspiration. We build upon the 2009 report of the Commission on the Measurement of Economic Performance and Social Progress, chaired by Joseph Stiglitz, Amartya Sen and Jean-Paul Fitoussi, which examined the limits of GDP as a measure of societal progress and called for greater emphasis on well-being, equity and sustainability. We also follow the work undertaken through the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) Better Life Initiative and related frameworks, which developed indicators of multidimensional well-being, as well as the Eurostat Beyond GDP initiative and its quality-of-life indicators, which further embedded multidimensional well-being measurement within official statistical systems. Lastly, we drew inspiration from countries that have already deployed multidimensional dashboards, such as Bhutan, Canada, Ecuador, Italy, New Zealand and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland. Together, these efforts expanded the scope of measuring progress beyond economic output to include its social, environmental and distributional dimensions.

15. Likewise, we consider the work undertaken to continuously improve the SNA and to integrate economic and environmental accounting. The emphasis on economic well-being and sustainability introduced in the 2025 revision is promising, but the full implementation of the updates, targeted for 2030, will pose substantial challenges for many countries. In addition, the SNA, by design, cannot capture the full range of dimensions required for a comprehensive assessment of societal well-being and sustainability, or the foundational conditions of human rights, peace and respect for the planet.

16. As part of our process, we conducted wide-ranging consultations with stakeholders to inform the Beyond GDP agenda. Participants expressed strong support for moving beyond GDP while calling for conceptual clarity, simplicity, and clear communication. They emphasized the value of a small set of indicators built on existing metrics and statistical systems and urged stronger attention to environmental sustainability, inequality, resilience, intergenerational concerns and cross-border spillovers.

17. The consultations also highlighted key risks and design priorities. Stakeholders stressed that implementation, data availability, capacity and financing must be treated as core design issues, with clear pathways that can be applied across different national contexts. Many cautioned against politically sensitive or methodologically contested indicators and warned that excessive complexity could reinforce GDP as the default benchmark. Stakeholders also emphasized the need to clearly distinguish this effort from earlier initiatives by clarifying the intended uses and links to global processes and policymaking and by ensuring that the framework remained credible, accessible and relevant to diverse national contexts.

18. Institutionalizing a new policy compass requires an ambitious agenda involving significant changes in measurement approaches, policy design, decision-making and behaviour. To that end, we propose recommendations aimed at moving beyond GDP for national and international institutions, including on the future development of headline aggregate indicators to complement the dashboard. Lastly, we set out a data and capacity agenda to ensure that countries at all levels of development can incorporate these new measures.

19. These recommendations are intended to support countries and multilateral bodies in meeting this moment. Successful implementation will enable policymakers to base decisions on a comprehensive, regularly updated set of indicators. It will help to ensure that people's aspirations and concerns are reflected in public debate and policymaking.

20. The recommendations are intended to be both ambitious *and* feasible. Nevertheless, we recognize that moving beyond GDP is a process, not a single step. Some recommendations can be implemented now; others will require time, resources, iteration, and, above all, long-term political commitment.

Box 1

Mandate of the High-Level Expert Group on Beyond GDP

The Secretary-General established the independent High-Level Expert Group on Beyond GDP in May 2025. The Group's establishment was the result of extensive intergovernmental deliberations at the United Nations that culminated in consensus agreement on the Pact for the Future, in which Member States requested the Secretary-General to convene experts "to develop recommendations for a limited number of country-owned and universally applicable indicators of sustainable development that complement and go beyond gross domestic product, in close consultation with Member States and relevant stakeholders, taking into account the work of the Statistical Commission, building on the global indicator framework for the Sustainable Development Goals and targets of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development".

The recommendations resulting from the Group's work will be presented to Member States during the eightieth session of the General Assembly (2025-2026) and will inform subsequent intergovernmental deliberations. In bringing the Beyond GDP agenda to the United Nations, Member States have signalled the urgency of establishing new measures of progress at a time of mounting economic, social and environmental pressures, in line with the aim, set out in the Charter of the United Nations, of promoting social progress and better standards of life in larger freedom.

CHAPTER
3

Conceptual Framework:
An Integrated, Universal Framework for Progress

21. We developed a conceptual framework (see Figure 2) to describe our understanding of progress and its key components, thereby providing a structure for measurement, which is outlined in Chapter 4. The conceptual framework is guided by the UN Charter and the values and purposes enshrined therein. Our approach draws on insights from previous initiatives and normative frameworks discussed above, such as other Beyond GDP initiatives and the 2030 Agenda, while seeking convergence across these efforts. In addition, we introduce a number of new ideas to develop a well-being framework anchored in today's realities and challenges.

22. The framework has the following structural features:

a. The framework emphasizes three foundational principles of progress – peace, human rights and respect for the planet – in line with the Charter (see Box 2).

Box 2 Foundational Principles

In line with the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations, the Group's conceptual framework emphasizes three interrelated foundational principles, discussed below.

Peace. The notion of peace encompasses both the absence of violence and the assurance of physical security, as well as a broader, positive conception that includes the structural conditions that enable societies, through their norms and institutions, to manage conflict, foster cooperation and sustain well-being over time. As Nelson Mandela acknowledged, "[p]eace is not just the absence of conflict; peace is the creation of an environment where all can flourish, regardless of race, colour, creed, religion, gender, class, caste or any other social markers of difference".

Human rights, as enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the wider body of international human rights law, which recognize that "all human rights are universal, indivisible, and interdependent and interrelated". This includes civic and political rights as well as economic, social and cultural rights. Progress and human rights are intertwined, and one can scarcely exist without the other. At the same time, we recognize the progressive realization approach to human rights, whereby consideration is given to the financial and other resources available to a government when assessing its compliance with its obligations with respect to civil, social and economic rights.

Respect for the planet, including for planetary boundaries. Planetary boundaries are scientifically identified environmental limits within which humanity can safely operate on Earth. Once these boundaries are crossed, there is a high risk of irreparable damage to the planet and, by extension, major impacts on the well-being of its people.

b. Its overarching objective is to measure equitable, inclusive, and sustainable well-being. This entails considering three interrelated components: current well-being, equity and inclusion, and sustainability.

c. Our understanding of well-being places both people and planet at the centre (see Box 3). We understand well-being as a shared condition linking individuals, the communities and societies in which they live, and the planet that sustains them. This re-calibrated understanding of well-being is a response to the urgent triple planetary crisis of climate change, pollution and biodiversity loss, which threatens both planet and people.

d. We recognize that well-being is not only an individual condition but also a collective one. Many dimensions of progress – including not only economic development but also areas such as safety, inclusion, opportunity, and resilience – depend on the quality of relationships, trust, and cooperation within and between communities. These dimensions cannot be captured by a simple aggregation of individual experiences. The framework emphasizes that social cohesion is both a driver and an outcome of progress, underscoring its role in delivering social and institutional sustainability and, by extension, economic sustainability.

e. The framework considers well-being in both the present and the future, recognizing that future outcomes depend on actions taken today. This is particularly evident for planetary well-being but applies across all dimensions. A forward-looking perspective requires safeguarding key forms of capital – produced, human, social, institutional, and natural – in the present and the future to sustain well-being over time. For instance, the depletion of natural resources or underinvestment in infrastructure, health, education and institutions, undermine well-being for both current and future generations. The framework also incorporates resilience, understood as the capacity of societies and individuals to absorb shocks, adapt

Box 3 Dual Perspective on a Healthy Planet and Environment

We highlight the importance of a healthy planet and environment through a dual perspective that recognizes both the intrinsic value of the planet and its environment, as well as the environment as a critical determinant of human well-being. Acknowledging the intrinsic value of the environment strengthens the case for protecting the planet even when there are no apparent immediate economic benefits of doing so. The environment also sets the boundaries within which humanity can thrive, including through climate stability, biodiversity, fertile soil and clean water. If these limits are breached, we risk irreversible tipping points, which would endanger both the planet and future generations. In addition, the environment directly contributes to human well-being: clean air and water are key to our health, fertile soils and pollination secure food systems, and forests regulate floods and stabilize local climates.

This proposal requires the inclusion of three types of indicators: (1) planetary boundary indicators, as part of our foundational principles; (2) human-centred indicators focused on environmental quality and its impact on current well-being (such as pollution and access to clean water), which capture the direct link between planetary well-being and human well-being; and (3) capital indicators, with a particular focus on natural capital, which are used to assess whether societies are sustaining or eroding the base that supports current and future well-being and progress.

The dual perspective prevents a "sustainability mirage", in which economic or human capital accumulation masks ecological degradation or wealth indicators overstate sustainability in cases where decreases in natural capital are compensated by increases in other forms of capital. Without an explicit focus on planetary boundaries, such trajectories could be misinterpreted as sustainable.

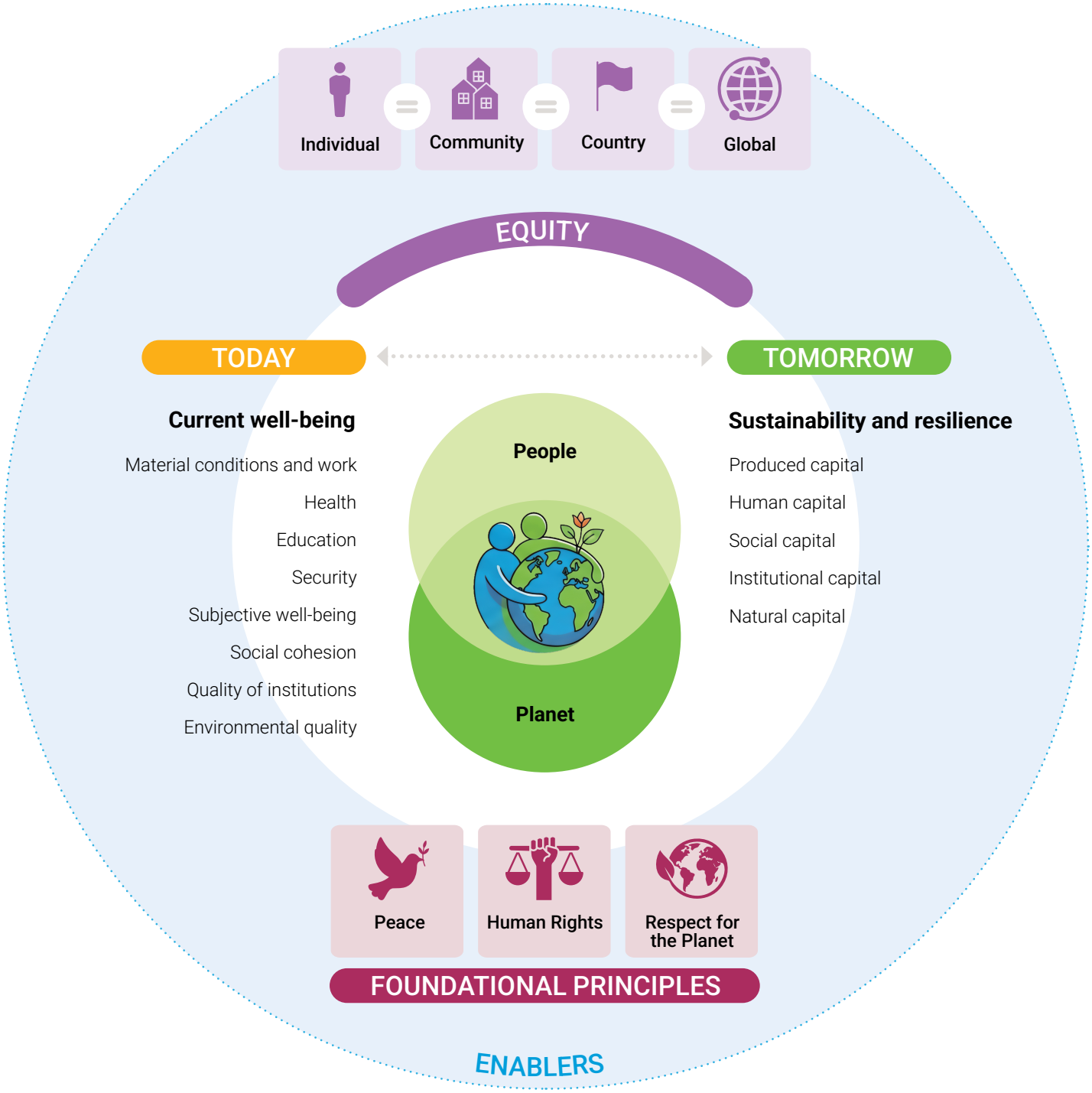
Moreover, this perspective also reinforces the need to emphasize equity and inclusion. Climate change and environmental damage often hit the poorest communities the hardest, even though those communities have contributed the least to the problem. Similarly, the resources and environment of future generations are significantly affected by today's disregard for our planet.

to changing conditions and, when necessary, undergo more fundamental transformations while preserving core functions.

f. In an increasingly globalized world, attention must be paid to cross-border spillovers. Well-being is often shaped by forces beyond national borders, which must be reflected in progress assessments and efforts to support coordinated action between governments and stakeholders around the world. The provision and protection of global public goods, such as peace, a stable climate and global health, are essential and require collaboration and solidarity, as responsibilities are unevenly distributed and some costs are shifted across borders. Though international collaboration has been weakened in recent years, it remains fundamental for people and planet.

g. Lastly, we highlight several enablers that shape a society's ability to generate and sustain well-being over time, including well-governed technological capacity, research and innovation. In that connection, effective and inclusive governance and State capacity are key drivers of well-being that underpin a wide range of outcomes by influencing how policies are designed and implemented, how resources are allocated and how trade-offs between groups and generations are managed.

Figure 2: A conceptual framework for measuring equitable, inclusive and sustainable well-being and progress



CHAPTER

4

From Conceptual Framework to Measurement:

Dashboard and Headline Indicators

DASHBOARD

23. We developed a dashboard of indicators (see Figure 3) that measure key dimensions of progress and reflect the structural principles outlined in the conceptual framework. The dashboard is intentionally limited in scope, reflecting the mandate to propose a limited set of indicators and facilitate their practical implementation and use by policymakers.

24. The selection of indicators was guided by established best practices. Indicators that are policy-relevant, grounded in internationally agreed methodological standards, and intuitive were prioritized. Data availability, coverage and publication frequency were central considerations, and preference was given to indicators that are produced regularly and cover a large share of the global population. Where possible, indicators were selected to allow disaggregation across population groups and comparability across countries.

25. Close to half of the indicators selected for the proposed dashboard are drawn from the SDGs. This decision reflects our recognition of the extensive work of the international statistical community, in particular the Inter-Agency and Expert Group on Sustainable Development Goal Indicators, aimed at developing widely accepted, comparable and policy-relevant measures. The dashboard also includes selected frontier indicators to capture important dimensions of progress for which there are not yet well-established indicators. It explicitly indicates where gaps remain in capturing certain aspects of well-being, thereby signalling priorities for further methodological development and data collection. The inclusion of both objective and subjective indicators supports a more comprehensive assessment of well-being.

26. The proposed dashboard should be understood as an evolving tool, anchored in current data availability and informed by a clear conceptual framework, with room for improvement as data systems and collective priorities advance. In this sense, it reflects both the current state of measurement systems and where they need to evolve, as elaborated in Chapter 5 below. While many indicators in the dashboard are already widely available, gaps remain, particularly for least developed countries, reflecting differences in national statistical capacity. The current dashboard consists of indicators on four key elements: (a) the foundational principles; (b) current well-being; (c) equity and inclusion; and (d) sustainability and resilience.

27. To reflect the foundational principles of peace, human rights and respect for the planet, we propose five indicators, recognizing that they provide only a partial view. Certain violations, such as forced disappearances, torture, extrajudicial killings or crimes against humanity, cannot be meaningfully reduced to metrics. The proposed indicators should therefore be complemented by normative commitments, qualitative monitoring and strong institutional safeguards.

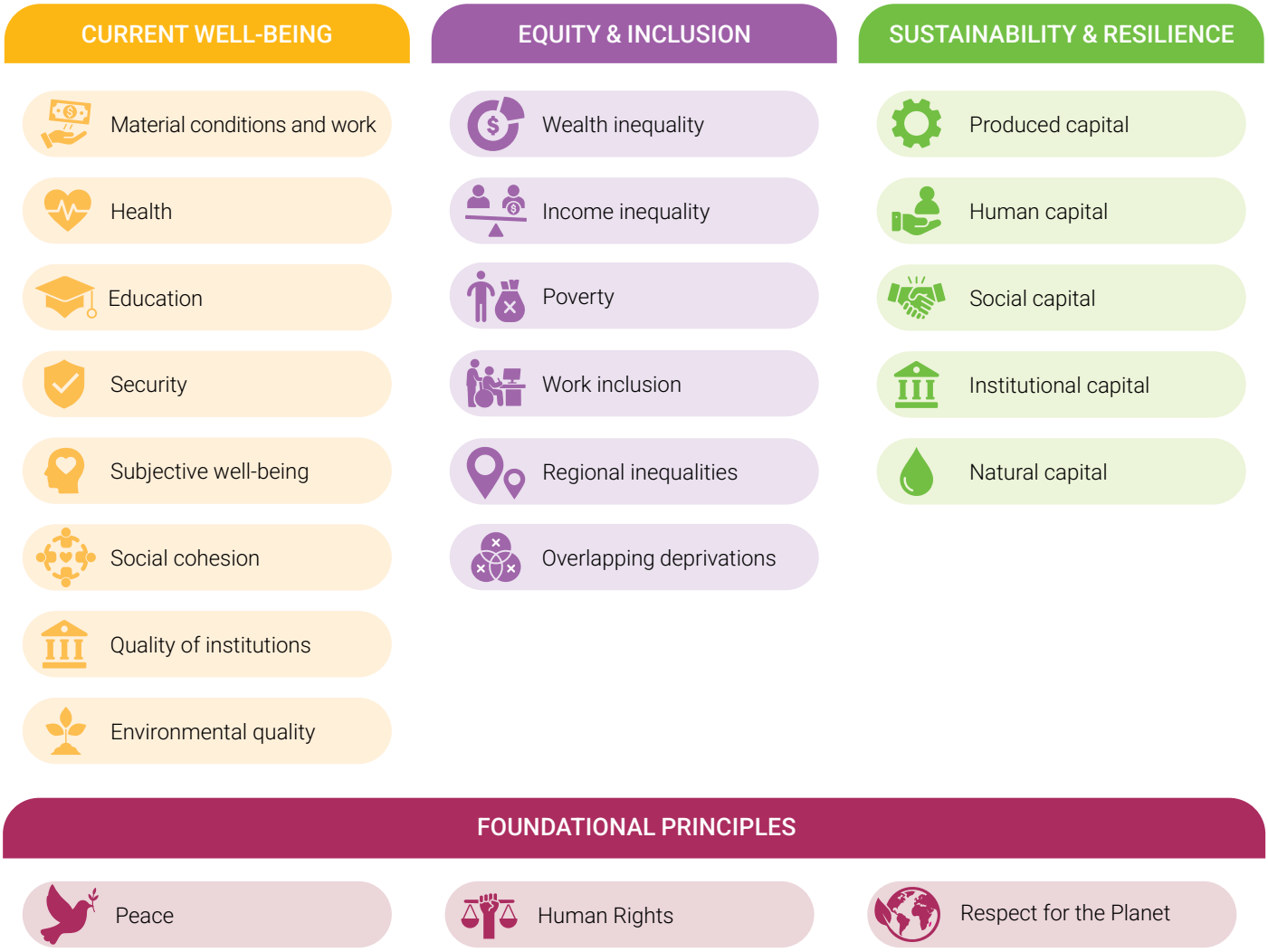
28. Indicators capturing current well-being reflect the experience of people and societies in the present day and encompass the domains of material conditions and work, health, education, security, subjective well-being, social cohesion, quality of institutions, and environmental quality (see Box 4).

29. Equity and inclusion indicators are a cross-cutting element that captures both horizontal and vertical disparities (see Box 5). These indicators also identify the extent to which minimum thresholds of well-being are not being met within societies and the degree to which deprivations overlap among individuals. We also encourage governments to consider additional country-specific dimensions of equity and inclusion relevant to their national context. For instance, while we suggest societal poverty lines measurement to ensure global comparability, countries may opt for national poverty line measurement, with this distinction already being implemented in different SDG indicators.[1]

30. Sustainability and resilience indicators connect the present to the future and reflect the ability to withstand shocks. To capture sustainability, we propose an approach that measures the various types of capital that underpin the capacity to sustain well-being and progress over time and respond to crises and shocks: produced capital, human capital, social capital, institutional capital and natural capital. While additional work is required to develop specific indicators, the proposed approach is the most promising avenue to achieve a comprehensive understanding of sustainable progress over longer time periods. This powerful approach provides a holistic view of progress. Activities that increase produced capital but deplete natural or other types of capital, and the associated positive and negative effects, are fully factored into measurements of a country's wealth, as opposed to GDP,

1 It is important to note, however, that national poverty lines should not be below societal poverty lines.

Figure 3: Proposed dashboard structure



which only captures economic output, and not potential reductions in the country's capital base. While it is notoriously difficult to measure, resilience is an important element of the conceptual framework. This is an area in which additional efforts are needed to further refine the associated indicators. In particular, the various types of capital measured over time will need to be assessed against the levels of capital accumulation required to sustain well-being into the future.

31. The dashboard deliberately does not include indicators for the enablers included in the conceptual framework and other frameworks, including the SDGs. While we recognize the importance of these enablers as prerequisites for progress, we recommend that the dashboard be limited to outcome indicators to maximize its interpretability.

Table 1: Proposed indicators

FOUNDATIONAL PRINCIPLES	
THEME	**INDICATOR**
Peace	Number of total conflict-related deaths per 100,000 population
Human rights	Proportion of population reporting having personally felt discriminated against or harassed in the previous 12 months
	Proportion of ever-partnered women and girls subjected to physical and/or sexual violence by a current or former intimate partner in the previous 12 months
Respect for the Planet	Total greenhouse gas emissions and greenhouse gas emissions per capita
	Biodiversity intactness index

CURRENT WELL-BEING		
DOMAIN	**CONCEPT**	**INDICATOR**
Material conditions and work	Disposable income	Household disposable income per capita
	Work status	Composite rate of labour underutilization
	Work	Proportion of time spent on unpaid domestic and care work
Health	Life expectancy	Healthy life expectancy at birth
	Infant health	Low-birthweight babies (percentage of births)
Education	Educational attainment	Proportion of children and young people achieving a minimum proficiency level in reading and mathematics
	Technological skills	Proportion of youth and adults with information and communications technology skills
Security	Crime	Intentional homicides per 100,000 population
	Sense of security	Proportion of population that feel safe walking alone around the area they live after dark
Subjective well-being	Subjective well-being	Life satisfaction
Social cohesion	Loneliness	Proportion of people saying they felt loneliness “a lot of the day yesterday”
Quality of institutions	Effectiveness of public services	Proportion of population satisfied with their last experience of public services
Environmental quality	Air	Annual mean levels of fine particulate matter in cities
	Water	Proportion of population using safely managed drinking water services

EQUITY AND INCLUSION	
SUBCATEGORY	**INDICATOR**
Wealth inequality	Wealth share of the richest 1%
Income inequality	Gini index
Poverty	Poverty headcount ratio at societal poverty line (fixed at a baseline)
Work inclusion	Average hourly earnings of women as a proportion of men
Regional inequalities	Proportion of the rural population who live within 2 km of an all-season road
Overlapping deprivations	Multidimensional poverty index

SUSTAINABILITY AND RESILIENCE	
SUBCATEGORY	**INDICATOR**
Produced capital	Net produced capital stock
Human capital	Share of youth not in education, employment or training (NEET)
	Potential years of life lost (PYLL), all causes
Social capital	Share of people who say most people can be trusted
Institutional capital	Proportion of population reporting they have confidence in the civil services
Natural capital	Total monetary asset count of the 7 classifications of environmental assets as defined in the System of Environmental Economic Accounting (SEEA) Central Framework: mineral and energy resources, land, soil resources, timber resources, aquatic resources, other biological resources, and water resources

Box 4 Domains of Current Well-Being

Selecting a limited number of domains to assess the well-being of both people and planet is a difficult task. The domains selected for this framework have a strong empirical backing, are consistently included in other national and international exercises measuring well-being, and reflect conditions that policy can meaningfully influence. They also overlap with many SDGs.

Material conditions and work (SDG 1 and SDG 8). While well-being is not determined by income alone, sufficient material resources are a necessary condition for people to exercise choice and agency in their lives. Without adequate means, individuals and families are constrained to meeting day-to-day needs. Persistent material deprivation undermines people's ability to plan, invest in their future, and participate in society fully. Beyond the monetary benefits of employment, work also provides a sense of dignity and self-realization.

Health (SDG 3). Good health underpins quality of life and longevity, while poor health directly limits people's ability to work, learn, and participate in society. Health outcomes are closely linked to material conditions and feed back into income, productivity and social inclusion. Early-life health disadvantages have long-lasting consequences, and population health is a central component of human capital, sustainable development, and quality of life.

Education (SDG 4). Being educated supports informed participation in civic life and strengthens people's sense of autonomy and dignity. At the same time, education and lifelong learning programmes provide the skills and capabilities required to adapt to changing labour markets, innovate and make forward-looking choices. Low educational attainment is associated with limited opportunities, lower quality of life and vulnerability to exclusion. Education also generates public benefits, contributes to better outcomes across generations, and supports broader social and economic development.

Security (SDG 16). Safety and security are central to how people experience well-being. Safety from violence – whether in public spaces, at home or online – is a basic condition for leading a dignified life. In insecure contexts, fear and exposure to risk constrain mobility, limit economic activity and erode trust. In addition, the burdens of insecurity do not affect all groups equally, with women and vulnerable groups often facing heightened risks. Where public security is weak, those with resources resort to private protection, deepening inequality.

Subjective well-being. This domain captures how people perceive and experience their lives, which influences their behaviour, aspirations and investment in the future. The gap between people's perceptions and many objective indicators points to the value of measuring people's subjective experience to capture elements that are not otherwise observed.

Social cohesion (SDG 5, SDG 10 and SDG 16). Social cohesion underpins informal safety nets, collective action and public support for redistributive and welfare policies. Social isolation is linked to poor mental and physical health across income levels. Social cohesion is often underrepresented in other frameworks but is increasingly relevant as isolation and loneliness are on the rise in many societies.

Quality of institutions (SDG 16 and SDG 17) is essential to current well-being, equity and inclusiveness, and sustainability. Effective institutions underpin the delivery of public services, the protection of rights and the functioning of markets. They shape whether policies are implemented fairly and whether citizens can trust public systems. Weak institutions are consistently associated with poor economic performance, inequality and instability.

Environmental quality (SDG 6, SDG 13, SDG 14 and SDG 15). Environmental quality is central to both present and future well-being. Environmental degradation directly affects health, livelihoods and life satisfaction, while climate-related risks threaten lives and economic security.

Box 5 Gender, a Special Case of Horizontal Inequality

Within the pillar of equity and inclusion, gender equality deserves particular attention as a special case of horizontal inequality. Horizontal inequalities are rooted in group-based identities that are socially ascribed, often inherited, and relatively immutable. While many horizontal inequalities (race, caste, ethnicity, sometimes religion) are important, they may differ across contexts. Gender inequality, however, is distinctive in its universality: it affects societies in every country and compounds other inequalities. Women generally fare worse than men, even within groups already at a disadvantage.

For this reason, we dedicate special attention to gender equality in the following two ways: (1) through dedicated indicators aimed at capturing gender (in-)equality directly; and (2) through data disaggregation. Disaggregating indicators across groups, particularly by gender, can shed light on systemic and historical discrimination and disadvantage that shape outcomes and opportunities.

HEADLINE AGGREGATE INDICATORS

32. Indicator dashboards are effective tools for capturing the multidimensional nature of well-being and comparing performance across the domains that matter for people and planet. They are particularly valuable for identifying strengths and weaknesses in specific areas and for informing policy actions to address those areas. At the same time, they are inherently complex, which makes them less suitable for use as a simple, high-level guide for communication and decision-making. For instance, in scenarios where one indicator improves while another deteriorates or where indicators for different dimensions improve at different rates, a dashboard cannot clearly indicate whether a country is better off in aggregate terms or how much progress has been made. By contrast, the main limitation of GDP as an indicator – its narrow focus – is also a source of strength: it is a single, easy to communicate figure that allows for comparison across time and space.

33. A Beyond GDP headline aggregate indicator – or a limited number of them – could complement the proposed dashboard by focusing attention, guiding public debate and strengthening accountability. Such an indicator could be used to communicate overall progress, while remaining anchored in the various dimensions of the dashboard. It could be used to help to summarize changes across multiple dimensions, especially when progress is uneven or occurs at different speeds.

34. A headline indicator that aggregates multiple dimensions under a theoretically coherent framework would be ideal to complement the proposed dashboard. When developing such an indicator, explicit choices about how different dimensions are weighted and aggregated must be made, which makes trade-offs and relative priorities more explicit. Decisions must also be made regarding the methods used to combine diverse dimensions measured in different units into a single indicator. Even when aggregation is technically feasible, it inevitably involves normative choices, for example, combining income and inequality into a single measure requires judgments about the degree of inequality aversion in a society. There is no universally agreed method for aggregation, and different assumptions, preferences and priorities can lead to markedly different results.

35. Given these considerations, we recommend developing a limited number of headline aggregate indicators under the broad rubric of "Well-being Beyond GDP", which would be designed to summarize key dimensions of progress in a transparent and methodologically robust way. Ideally, the headline aggregate indicators would mirror our proposed conceptual framework and dashboard as closely as possible. The indicators could be developed gradually, reflecting differences in data availability and methodological readiness. Once fully developed, the headline aggregate indicators should be reported regularly alongside GDP. Their purpose would not be to replace or compete with existing macroeconomic aggregates, but to complement them by capturing dimensions overlooked by GDP.

36. Despite extensive deliberations, the Group's members did not reach consensus on selecting one or more headline aggregate indicators. Nevertheless, two illustrative options are presented here.

37. One of the indicators considered by the Group summarizes the distributional dimension of income-based well-being, fitting into the equity and inclusion component of the dashboard. Household disposable income per capita would be adjusted using an inequality measure, such as the Gini coefficient, the Atkinson index, the share of income received by the richest 1%, or an income-share ratio. Reference values for the chosen inequality index would be set at the global median in a base year and held constant over time. Countries with inequality below the reference level would receive an upward adjustment, while those with inequality above the reference level would receive a downward adjustment. Such an indicator would address two key elements of the conceptual framework: material conditions and equity and inclusion. The advantage of such an indicator is that it relies on widely available data, making it readily operational.

38. Another headline aggregate indicator explored by the Group is a broader aggregate index that combines income with selected non-monetary dimensions of well-being, such as health, environmental quality and potentially other elements of the conceptual framework and dashboard (see Box 6).[2] The design of such an indicator builds on the one described above. First, household disposable income per capita would be adjusted using an inequality index. Then, additional adjustments would be made for performance in non-monetary dimensions. For each selected dimension, an adjustment factor would be applied, reducing the overall score when outcomes fall short of a given benchmark, such as the median. In this way, income would be effectively "penalized" when well-being under a given dimension was weak. One of the main challenges in implementing such an indicator would be estimating appropriate weights for the non-monetary dimensions that accurately reflected people's preferences. For some components, such as health, as measured by life expectancy, the existing literature already provides empirically based estimates; for others, however, the relevant preference-based weights have yet to be derived. The modular structure of such an indicator would enable additional dimensions to be integrated as methodologies advance.

CROSS-COUNTRY SPILLOVERS

39. Our conceptual framework recognizes the importance of cross-border spillovers and the associated impacts on the well-being of people and the planet. However, indicators that provide a comprehensive view of a country's international impacts, both positive and negative and across time and space, are currently lacking.

40. We recommend that spillover indicators be developed and published systematically, alongside the other elements of the dashboard, which are focused primarily on domestic and subnational outcomes. Such indicators would help to identify how countries' actions affect others, highlighting how they contribute to, or detract from, global well-being. Existing efforts, such as the Center for Global Development's Commitment to Development Index, offer a useful reference point, but they mainly cover high-income countries and would need to be extended to cover low- and middle-income countries.

41. Relevant areas for spillover indicators include contributions to global public goods, such as environmental performance, health, security and technology, as well as cross-border exchanges through investment, migration, trade and support for multilateral action and development cooperation. Specific examples include vaccination rates, antimicrobial use, cyberactivity, mediation engagement and open-source software.

42. Defining the scope of spillover indicators poses both political and methodological challenges, including the need to account for the historical and long-term nature of many spillovers. These challenges are significant but not insurmountable. Given the increasing interconnectedness of the global economy and society, failing to measure cross-border impacts is no longer tenable. We therefore recommend that concrete steps be taken to advance their development.

2 Benoît Decerf, Marc Fleurbaey, Carol Graham and Nora Lustig (2026). "Beyond GDP: a synthetic index to measure multidimensional progress".

Box 6 Beyond GDP: Aggregate Well-Being Indices

When developing aggregate well-being indices, one key design choice pertains to how to weigh multiple dimensions within a single measure. There are two broad families of weighting strategies used in multidimensional indices of well-being: data-driven and normative.

Data-driven strategies, on one hand, let the data "speak for themselves", for example through frequency-based weights, factor analysis or principal components. They can be useful for exploring structure in the data and as a data-reduction technique, but they entail the risk of simply reproducing the information conveyed in existing data. Crucially, the underlying value judgments remain implicit when such strategies are used.[3]

Normative approaches instead fix the weights on ethical or conceptual grounds. Within this family, there are three strands. Many composite indices use exogenous weighting, such as equal weights across normalized dimensions, as is used in the Human Development Index.[4] This approach is transparent and easy to communicate, but essentially arbitrary: trade-offs (e.g. the decision to set one normalized unit of health equal to one of education) are encoded without theoretical or empirical justification.

Under the expert-deliberation-based weighting approach, priorities are gleaned from experts and policymakers or public consultations. This makes the value judgments more explicit and potentially more legitimate, but they are also sensitive to framing and to whose voices are heard.

Under the preference based normative weighting approach, trade offs are anchored in individual valuations, for example, by using stated or revealed preferences over dimensions or by estimating life satisfaction regressions in which coefficients for each domain are interpreted as implicit weights. However, eliciting preferences empirically is inherently challenging. The headline aggregate indicator mentioned above is an example of an indicator developed using a preference-based normative approach.

3 For a more detailed discussion, see K. Decancq and M. A. Lugo (2013).

4 Since the creation of the Human Development Index in 1990, the Human Development Reports have championed a multidimensional, beyond-GDP agenda. See bibliography.

CHAPTER
5

Future Agenda and Pathway to Global Adoption

STATISTICAL AND DATA AGENDA

43. The global adoption of our Beyond GDP framework depends on countries' ability to adapt it to national priorities, populate the dashboard with credible data, and use it to guide policy decisions. Countries can begin with a partial implementation of the framework immediately rather than waiting to attain a prescribed level of statistical development. The initial steps can build on the SDG indicator framework, which has established methodologies and designated custodian agencies. This integration with SDG monitoring processes leverages existing data collection efforts and reduces the burden of parallel reporting.

44. Other indicators require countries to have specific survey modules or administrative data systems that are not universally in place. Indicators on subjective well-being, interpersonal trust, perceptions of safety, and satisfaction with government services require nationally representative surveys with appropriate question modules. Many countries do not currently conduct such surveys on a regular basis, or do so through ad hoc arrangements that compromise data comparability and availability over time. Furthermore, measuring environmental assets under the SEEA framework requires expertise that many national statistical offices have yet to develop.

45. In addition to data availability, the frequency and timeliness of data are major determinants of the dashboard's policy value. The influence of GDP on policy discourse derives in part from its quarterly production cycle. For the dashboard to serve as a meaningful complement, its indicators should be produced annually, at minimum, and more frequently where feasible. At the same time, efforts should be made to improve timeliness: current average lag times for several indicators remain in the range of two to four years.

46. Disaggregation of data is also paramount. The commitment set out in the 2030 Agenda to leave no one behind resulted in an unprecedented emphasis on, and progress in, the availability of disaggregated data. Disaggregation is equally central to the Beyond GDP framework, particularly its equity and inclusion pillar. Countries require comprehensive data sets that enable disaggregation by multiple characteristics, including geographical dimensions, such as regional and rural/urban distinctions, as well as demographic characteristics, such as age, sex, socioeconomic status and income level, nationality, country of origin and migratory status, ethnicity and race, and disability status, as already called for in SDG target 17.18. The Beyond GDP framework also requires data on cumulative deprivations and achievements to, among other things, identify the groups who are truly left behind because they experience multiple simultaneous deprivations.

47. Solving issues of data availability, timeliness, frequency and disaggregation requires an ambitious, long-term agenda. Our proposal includes a minimum reporting standard, a tiered approach for indicator production and further methodological development, including data innovation.

48. The minimum reporting standard is aimed at facilitating coherent and immediate implementation, while recognizing that national capacities vary. At minimum, countries should publish: (a) the indicators and their trend over time; (b) metadata specifying the definition, source, reference period, geographical coverage and institutional producer; (c) timeliness information; (d) disaggregation where available and relevant, explicitly identifying which disaggregation is not yet feasible; and (e) documentation of known limitations, breaks in series, or methodological changes.

49. This minimum standard is complemented by a progressive pathway for moving from occasional to regular and more frequent production; reducing time lags; expanding population and geographical coverage, including subnational reporting; improving comparability through enhanced application of international standards; expanding disaggregation to support equity analysis; strengthening coherence; and pursuing data innovation.

50. Additionally, we propose a tiered approach, in line with the one already used for the SDG indicators, which reflects the scale and type of investment required to produce indicators to the minimum standard (see annex).

51. Tier I indicators are conceptually clear, have internationally established methodologies and standards, and are supported by data that are regularly produced for at least 50% of countries and at least 50% of the population in every region where the indicator is relevant. For these indicators, the proposed data agenda is focused on progressive enhancement, with a view to improving data timeliness, frequency and disaggregation.

52. Tier II indicators are conceptually clear and have internationally established methodologies and standards but are not yet regularly produced by countries. These include, for example, subjective well-being, social cohesion, and environmental quality. For this tier, countries and the statistical community are encouraged to invest in the systems, skills and resources needed to support regular production and reporting.

53. Tier III indicators do not yet have internationally established methodologies or standards but are being developed or tested. While efforts were made to propose indicators that fall into at least tier I or II for the initial dashboard, suggestions for future, improved indicators can fall into this tier. The statistical community is invited

to engage with academic experts to develop these new indicators and methodologies and support countries with longer-term capacity-building.

54. Several areas central to current well-being and included in our framework warrant additional methodological development. Digital transformation, for example, is reshaping how people work, learn and connect, yet the current information and communication technology skills indicator does not fully capture the distribution of digital opportunity and risk. Mental health is central to lived experience but is not yet fully captured by health and life satisfaction indicators. Social cohesion is more nuanced than just loneliness. We encourage the statistical community to prioritize methodological development in these areas.

55. The sustainability and resilience component of the dashboard requires indicators that measure human, institutional, natural, social and produced capital stock. We call for a significant investment to enable global and periodic collection of such data, starting as soon as possible. The data agenda also entails further work on this issue, recognizing recent important efforts such as the Multidimensional Vulnerability Index (MVI), and the vulnerability and resilience dashboards developed by the European Commission.

56. Data innovation should support efforts to address gaps in coverage, timeliness, and disaggregation. Geospatial data, mobile phone data and citizen-generated data are promising complements to traditional statistical methods, as are emerging technologies such as artificial intelligence-assisted data processing. All such innovations require partnerships and should be governed by the Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics and established quality assurance, privacy protection and transparency practices.

57. Implementing the data agenda presented here will require deliberate investment in both the international statistical infrastructure (standards, methods and classification frameworks that underpin comparability) and in national statistical systems and the international organizations that support them, with capacity-building as a central priority. National statistical offices should be recognized as the coordinating authority for dashboard compilation and development of foundational data systems to enable further disaggregation, convening data producers across the national statistical system for such purposes.

58. Implementing this data agenda will also require sustained and predictable funding and targeted capacity-building, particularly in countries with more limited statistical systems. The tiered approach enables gradual adoption, but progress depends on investments to strengthen core data systems, expand survey programmes or integrate standardized modules and improve timeliness through greater use of administrative and other data sources. Progress also requires building capacity for data integration, disaggregation and overall system coherence. Coordinated international support and advocacy will be essential to mobilize resources and ensure that implementation pathways remain aligned with countries' capacities and constraints.

59. Effective governance and clear institutional arrangements will be essential for sustained and effective implementation of this data agenda. Existing SDG arrangements should be leveraged, with custodian agencies continuing to provide methodological guidance, maintain metadata, and leverage support for national capacity development. For non-SDG indicators, technical stewardship will be necessary to identify appropriate agencies and partners that can provide comparable support.

60. Lastly, it is important to acknowledge that this data agenda is being proposed at a time of major digital transformation. The effects of artificial intelligence on daily life, work, well-being, and progress may prove to be as far-reaching as the invention of the printing press or the Internet. In this context, how progress is defined and measured may change dramatically. Given the potential ways in which artificial intelligence could shape the global security architecture, job markets and daily routines, it is unlikely that any area of our framework will remain unaffected. It is essential to pay attention to the implications of the ongoing transformation to ensure that the framework continues to measure what actually matters to people and planet, not only today but for years to come.

GLOBAL ADOPTION

61. The ultimate success and impact of our Beyond GDP framework hinges on how it is used to reshape the measurement and communication of progress and to inform policy. Earlier initiatives have had limited political traction and mainstream policy application despite broad recognition of the limitations of GDP. The continued reliance

on GDP reflects several factors: the intuitive appeal of a single, simple and well-established indicator; the deep institutional embedding of GDP in legislation, policymaking and finance; the fragmented landscape of alternative options; and weak political incentives to move towards a multidimensional approach to well-being.

62. To achieve effective national-level implementation, however, lessons can be drawn from the experiences of countries that have successfully institutionalized alternative frameworks. Two factors have proved to be critical: budgeting and operational mainstreaming. Initiatives such as the Brede Welvaart reporting to Parliament in the Kingdom of the Netherlands, well-being budgets in Ireland and New Zealand, the embedding of well-being indicators in the public budget planning process in Italy and the United Kingdom, and the gross national happiness framework in Bhutan and the Buen Vivir national happiness framework in Ecuador demonstrate that durable traction occurs when well-being metrics are institutionalized within traditional government operations.

63. Sustained uptake also depends on specific operational tools that can be used to convert metrics into action. Lessons from the Treasury Green Book on Appraisal and Evaluation in the United Kingdom, the National Performance Framework in Scotland, the Quality of Life Framework in Canada and the related participatory framework introduced by Engage Nova Scotia, the Equitable and Sustainable Well-being initiative in Italy, the Environmental Quality Objectives in Sweden, and national development plans in Ecuador show the importance of cross-agency coordination, monitoring and clear lines of accountability.

64. Broader well-being metrics can be applied across the full policy cycle, from diagnosis and strategic prioritization to policy design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation. In practice, achieving this requires tools such as distributional impact assessments, well-being-informed cost-benefit analysis, performance frameworks with clear outcome targets and regular monitoring systems that track progress across the various dimensions of well-being. These tools help to identify priority areas, assess trade-offs, guide programme design and evaluate policy effectiveness over time. Many of these approaches are relatively recent, and their durability depends on sustained institutional support, clear mandates and their integration into core government processes across political cycles.

65. It is our hope and expectation that the proposed framework will tangibly improve how policy decisions are made. New practices will yield new information and better decision-making. Budget allocation informed by a well-being dashboard will reveal trade-offs that GDP alone obscures, such as the trade-off between maximizing short-term output and investing in health, education or environmental protection. Investments in human capital, physical infrastructure and natural capital will become more transparent and accountable to citizens. Integration of new metrics into economic mechanisms, such as certification and investment, and sectoral policies can guide decision-makers to make more balanced choices.

66. Reporting on and communicating about well-being in the future will require performance assessments that extend beyond GDP growth. International peer comparison on multiple dimensions of well-being will create incentives for improvement. The public will be able to engage with progress metrics that reflect their experience. Public accountability will be strengthened. A more comprehensive understanding of progress will also support the prevention of conflict and fragility. Post-conflict reconstruction will be guided by restoration of well-being and social cohesion rather than a narrow focus on economic recovery.

67. The next phase to achieve widespread adoption of the proposed framework must be focused on building statistical capacity and political demand in tandem. Statistical capacity without political commitment and leadership produces unused data, and political commitment without statistical capacity produces empty rhetoric. In the intergovernmental process in which Member States deliberate on the proposed recommendations, both statistical capacity and political demand should be advanced simultaneously so that the proposed indicators can become part of how Governments and the international community define progress, allocate resources, and hold each other accountable. This is how the new compass begins to guide the journey.

68. The Beyond GDP framework must also be useful to international financial institutions and investors. Currently, country classifications, concessional finance allocation, and debt sustainability analyses remain GDP-centred. We recommend structured engagement between Governments and international financial institutions to explore the incorporation of Beyond GDP measures into those frameworks.

69. This effort will remain a work in progress over the next decade and perhaps longer, but there is no viable alternative.

CHAPTER

6

Recommendations

70. The following recommendations provide practical road maps for different constituencies to implement the conceptual and measurement framework proposed in this report. We consider these recommendations complementary; no single intervention will achieve the change required to move beyond GDP. Achieving that goal will also require the unwavering commitment of different sectors of the world's population to act. Rapid implementation of the proposed framework by a small number of pioneering Member States will drive the agenda forward. More generally, we ask the following actors to discuss the recommendations set out below and, whenever feasible, to implement them.

71. **Governments.** The vision set out in this report rests on changes in measurement, policy design and norm-setting, and Governments, as the primary drivers of those changes, are indispensable actors in this effort. Their leadership is central to pursuing progress in a multidimensional manner. They are also required to cooperate at the international level, in particular, to agree on norms and processes on how to take this agenda forward.

72. **We call upon all Governments to:**

(a) Engage in the forthcoming intergovernmental process at the United Nations to agree on global norms for measuring progress and their implementation;

(b) Establish, by 2027, national progress-measuring initiatives using our proposed dashboard, tailored to country-specific needs and priorities, with the involvement of civil society organizations;

(c) Integrate the proposed dashboard into national policymaking processes, including annual presentations to government bodies, as well as into budgetary approval processes, cost-benefit analyses, and accountability frameworks;

(d) Reinforce existing efforts to improve availability of data on the SDGs and strengthen statistical capacity to build enhanced systems for disaggregated data to measure progress for everyone, everywhere, and address emerging priorities;

(e) Increase investments in data availability and statistical capacity, including through official development assistance and South-South or triangular cooperation;

(f) Task national statistical offices to develop statistical and data plans for the regular collection of the dashboard indicators and possible extensions of those indicators reflecting national preferences, to identify and address data gaps, and to publish updated dashboards and future aggregate headline indicators on an annual basis, and provide those offices with sufficient resources for those purposes;

(g) Request national statistical offices to fast-track the development of an approach for capital accounting and the regular collection of data on the different types of capital, and to collaborate with researchers and subject matter experts to advance the development of inclusive and comprehensive wealth frameworks to enhance the measurement of factors that sustain progress over time, building on global guidelines (see para. 76(c)).

73. **The United Nations and other international organizations.** International organizations play a central role in shaping norms for measuring progress, generating comparative evidence and analysis, and supporting national capacity. The Beyond GDP agenda brings together the work of multiple organizations under a single, unifying theme and hinges on their cooperation.

74. **We call upon the United Nations and other international organizations to:**

(a) From 2027 onward, produce an annual progress report, led by the United Nations, that assesses all countries using the proposed conceptual and measurement framework, with a focus on tracking progress over time. This effort should be aligned with SDG reporting;

(b) Starting in 2027, establish at the United Nations, via existing structures, a dedicated mechanism to support countries in enhancing statistical capacity and data availability for indicators on equitable, inclusive and sustainable well-being and progress and to mobilize joint financial and technical support programmes for national statistical offices and Governments, such as the Joint SDG Fund;

(c) Establish, within the United Nations, development and assessment criteria to monitor countries' progress in supporting the three foundational principles of peace, human rights and respect for the planet;

(d) Adopt Beyond GDP indicators in international and global decision-making frameworks, and ensure that a broader understanding of progress is incorporated into the metrics and the assessments of international financial institutions, debt sustainability analyses, and concessional finance allocation;

(e) Consider establishing a scientific committee under the auspices of the United Nations to further develop headline aggregate indicators that transparently and rigorously capture the key dimensions of progress, building on the work initiated by the HLEG.

75. **International statistical community.** The Beyond GDP effort depends on the credibility of emerging statistical concepts and methods, and their implementation

at the national and international level. The Statistical Commission is the world's leading body for guiding this effort. The Committee for the Coordination of Statistical Activities should engage with the Statistical Commission in a system-wide effort, to coordinate methodology development and country support.

76. We call upon the international statistical community to:

(a) Fast-track, through the Statistical Commission, the development of emerging statistical methods to maturity, in particular for indicators relating to human rights, subjective well-being, planetary boundaries, social cohesion and institutional capacity, building on ongoing work while remaining open to diverse data sources and citizen data, as exemplified by the Copenhagen Framework on Citizen Data;

(b) Establish, through the Statistical Commission, an inter-agency and expert group on the measurement of well-being and progress to regularly assess, validate and refine the proposed dashboard indicators to reflect the evolving nature of various phenomena, including the impact of technological change on the various domains of well-being and progress, using an inclusive and consultative approach seeking expertise from various statistical domains and beyond the statistical community, and applying a model similar to the Inter-Agency and Expert Group on SDG Indicators;

(c) Establish a joint mechanism, through a partnership with subject matter experts, the World Bank, and the United Nations Environment Programme, under the Statistical Commission, to develop shared, harmonized methodological guidelines for capital and comprehensive wealth accounting and explore estimating shadow prices of environmental assets, as well as a road map for the global implementation of those guidelines over the next 5 to 10 years;

(d) Identify an appropriate process or partner, such as the World Bank, to develop a methodology for identifying, quantifying and tracking, from 2027 onward, positive and negative spillovers between countries that affect people and planetary well-being;

(e) Establish, through the Statistical Commission, a high-level working group to reflect on and explore more systemic changes to the System of National Accounts to enable it to better measure the well-being of people and planet.

77. Civil society, academia, the private sector and the media. While most of the proposed recommendations concern governments, a broader ecosystem of actors participates in interpreting, debating and using measures of progress in practice – and ultimately holding policymakers to account. Civil society, academia, the private sector and the media play a critical role in shaping opinions and preferences and advancing public understanding, methodological innovation and societal uptake.

78. We call upon civil society, academia, the private sector and the media to:

(a) Develop and maintain complementary analyses, particularly in such areas as human rights, governance, environmental justice and inequality, where governments may have real or perceived conflicts of interest;

(b) Support regular public dialogues, including town hall meetings and participatory forums, with diverse groups following the annual publication of national dashboards, to foster public understanding, debate and accountability regarding the trajectory of progress and salient policy issues and trade-offs;

(c) Encourage local, national and international media to present other progress metrics alongside GDP as standard practice when reporting on economic and societal performance;

(d) Lead and engage actively in the continuous development, testing and refinement of the indicators set out in the dashboard, including headline indicators, domain-specific indicators, data sources, and analytical tools, through, inter alia, interdisciplinary research and innovative methods;

(e) Advocate in support, including funding, of the development, adoption and use of indicators of equitable, inclusive and sustainable well-being and progress within government and public institutions, as well as in public discourse;

(f) Engage constructively in the forthcoming intergovernmental process through existing national, regional and global mechanisms to support convergence on shared principles, standards and practices for measuring progress.

Annex:
Detailed information on dashboard indicators

Tier I indicators				
CATEGORY	**DOMAIN**	**INDICATOR**	**SOURCE**	**SUGGESTED IMPROVEMENTS**
Foundational principles	Human rights	Proportion of ever-partnered women and girls subjected to physical and/or sexual violence by a current or former intimate partner in the previous 12 months	SDG 5.2.1 World Health Organization (WHO), United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women), United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), United Nations Statistics Division	Though data for this indicator have been collected for nearly 80% of countries, the data collected cover only a single year (2018). To track progress, data need to be collected on an annual basis and country coverage needs to be expanded.
Foundational principles	Respect for the planet	Total greenhouse gas emissions, and greenhouse gas emissions per capita	SDG 13.2.2 United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) secretariat	NA

Tier I indicators

CATEGORY	DOMAIN	INDICATOR	SOURCE	SUGGESTED IMPROVEMENTS
Foundational principles	Respect for the planet	Biodiversity intactness index	United Kingdom Natural History Museum	While annual data are available for 94% of countries for the period 1970–2014, resources need to be invested to produce data on an annual basis going forward.
Current well-being	Material conditions and work	Household disposable income per capita	System of National Accounts (SNA)	While data on household disposable income are produced as an element of the SNA, such data are not available for all countries (approx. 70–80 countries have reported data to the Statistics Division). Efforts should be made to increase coverage. Moreover, in the future, such data should be corrected to account for services provided by the government, especially health and education.
Current well-being	Material conditions and work	Composite rate of labour underutilization (LU4)	International Labour Organization (ILO)	While 66% of countries produce such data on an annual basis, efforts should be made to increase coverage.
Current well-being	Health	Healthy life expectancy at birth	WHO	Data are available for 95% of countries, but the latest data available in early 2026 were from 2021; therefore, efforts should be made to improve data timeliness.
Current well-being	Health	Low-birthweight babies (percentage of births)	UNICEF, WHO	Data are available for 80% of countries, but the latest data available in early 2026 were from 2020; therefore, efforts should be made to improve data timeliness.
Current well-being	Education	Proportion of children and young people achieving a minimum proficiency level in reading and mathematics	SDG 4.1.1 United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) Institute of Statistics	Data are produced by 72% of countries, but the latest data available in early 2026 were from 2023; therefore, efforts are needed to increase country coverage to 100% and improve timeliness.

Tier I Indicators

CATEGORY	DOMAIN	INDICATOR	SOURCE	SUGGESTED IMPROVEMENTS
Current well-being	Security	Intentional homicides per 100,000 population	SDG 16.1.1 UNODC, WHO	One area of focus for future research should be the development of a multidimensional security index to account for the multidimensional nature of this domain. For instance, in many localities, crimes of theft may be more prevalent than crimes of physical violence. In the interim, data for this indicator can be improved in terms of coverage and timeliness: data are available for 90% of countries, and the latest data available in early 2026 were for 2023.
Current well-being	Subjective well-being	Life satisfaction based on the Cantril ladder	Gallup World Poll	While Gallup currently collects data on this indicator for more than 140 countries on an annual basis, resources should be invested in country-led surveys to reduce reliance on private data sources.
Current well-being	Social cohesion	Proportion of people saying they felt loneliness "a lot of the day yesterday"	Gallup World Poll	While Gallup World Poll currently collects data on this indicator for more than 140 countries on an annual basis, resources should be invested in country-led surveys to reduce reliance on private data sources
Current well-being	Environmental quality	Annual mean levels of fine particulate matter in cities	SDG 11.6.2 WHO	While data are available for 98% of countries, they are not timely, as the latest data available in early 2026 were for 2019. Additional investment is needed to improve timeliness.
Current well-being	Environmental quality	Proportion of population using safely managed drinking water services	SDG 6.1.1 UNICEF, WHO	Timely data are collected for 70% of countries; additional efforts are required to improve coverage to 100%.

Tier I Indicators

CATEGORY	DOMAIN	INDICATOR	SOURCE	SUGGESTED IMPROVEMENTS
Equity and inclusion	Income inequality	Gini index	World Bank	Data are available for 87% of countries, but are produced, on average, only once every three years. Investment is required to enable data production on an annual basis for all countries.
Equity and inclusion	Poverty	Poverty headcount ratio at societal poverty line	World Bank	Data are currently available for 81% of countries. Investment is required to improve country coverage.
Equity and inclusion	Work inclusion	Average hourly earnings of women as a proportion of men	SDG 8.5.1 ILO	Data are produced for only 65% of countries every two years. Investment is needed to improve country coverage and increase the frequency of production to an annual basis.
Sustainability and resilience	Produced capital	Net produced capital stock	SNA	NA
Sustainability and resilience	Human Capital	Share of youth not in education, employment or training (NEET)	SDG 8.6.1 ILO	Data are available for about 50% of countries. Investment is required to improve this coverage.
Sustainability and resilience	Institutional capital	Proportion of population reporting they have confidence in the civil services	World Values Survey	Data are currently collected for 56% of countries, and the latest data available in early 2026 were for 2022. Additional resources are required to increase data coverage and timeliness and promote country-led surveys.
Sustainability and resilience	Social capital	Share of people who say most people can be trusted	World Values Survey	Data are currently collected for 56% of countries, and the latest data available in early 2026 were for 2022. Additional resources are required to increase data coverage and timeliness and promote country-led surveys.

Tier II Indicators

CATEGORY	DOMAIN	INDICATOR	SOURCE	SUGGESTED IMPROVEMENTS
Foundational principles	Peace	Number of total conflict-related deaths per 100,000 population	SDG 16.1.2 Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR)	Data for this indicator are currently produced for only 33% of countries in conflict. Efforts are required to improve coverage to 100% of countries in conflict and improve the quality of the reported figures.
Foundational principles	Human rights	Proportion of population reporting having personally felt discriminated against or harassed in the previous 12 months	SDG 10.3.1 OHCHR	While about 50% of countries produce such data, they do so only on a biennial basis. Efforts are needed to increase frequency of production to an annual basis and increase country coverage.
Current well-being	Material conditions and work	Proportion of time spent on unpaid domestic and care work	SDG 5.4.1 United Nations Statistics Division, UN-Women	Data on this indicator are produced for only 46% of countries and, on average, only once every five years. Significant efforts are needed to improve country coverage and frequency.
Current well-being	Education	Proportion of youth and adults with information and communications technology skills	SDG 4.4.1 International Telecommunication Union (ITU)	About 50% of countries have data available for this indicator. Efforts are needed to improve coverage. The indicator should be reviewed on a recurring basis to ensure that it continues to capture the population's skills for the future.
Current well-being	Security	Proportion of population that feel safe walking alone around the area they live after dark	SDG 16.1.4 UNODC	Data are only produced for 26% of countries, which underscores the need for substantial investment to improve country coverage.

Tier II Indicators

CATEGORY	DOMAIN	INDICATOR	SOURCE	SUGGESTED IMPROVEMENTS
Current well-being	Quality of institutions	Proportion of population satisfied with their last experience of public services	SDG 16.6.2 United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)	Only 18% of countries have data available for this indicator. Investment is needed to improve this coverage.
Equity and inclusion	Wealth inequality	Wealth share of the richest 1%	World Inequality Database	While data are available for most countries, much of the data are modelled. Only about 30% of countries produce data based directly on surveys and wealth accounts. Investment is needed to standardize and expand countries' capacity for wealth accounting.
Equity and inclusion	Regional inequalities	Proportion of the rural population who live within 2 km of an all-season road	SDG 9.1.1 World Bank	Resources are required to improve country coverage.
Equity and inclusion	Overlapping deprivations	Multidimensional poverty index	UNDP	It is necessary to invest in surveys to improve frequency.
Sustainability and resilience	Natural capital	Environmental assets	SEEA	Only about 44% of countries have data available. Additional resources are required to improve country surveys.
Sustainability and resilience	Human capital	Potential years of life lost (PYLL), all causes, per 100,000 population aged 0–74, age-standardized	OECD Health Statistics (based on age-specific death data from WHO)	Comprehensive, comparable PYLL data are produced regularly only for OECD member countries and key partners (approximately 40–50 countries), drawing on WHO mortality data. Extending coverage globally requires substantial investment in civil registration and vital statistics systems, particularly in low- and middle-income countries where cause-of-death data are incomplete. The age cut-off (currently 70 or 75 depending on the source) should also be reviewed periodically to reflect rising life expectancy.

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This does not represent an exhaustive bibliography on Beyond GDP but only represents some of the work that shaped the Group's thinking.

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