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THE KURUKSHETRA OF DIPLOMACY

STUDY GUIDE · AGENDA

HLPF

HIGH-LEVEL POLITICAL FORUM

AGENDA / FOCUS

Reviewing progress and challenges in financial climate resilience, poverty reduction, and inclusive sustainable development under the 2030 Agenda.

31 JUL — 02 AUG 2026

DELHI PUBLIC SCHOOL, SILIGURI

THE KURUKSHETRA OF DIPLOMACY

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. <u>Letter From the Executive Board</u>

Greetings Delegates!

It gives us immense pleasure to welcome you to the simulation of the High-Level Political Forum (HLPF) as a part of the Legatio 2026.

The HLPF serves as the central body providing political leadership, guidance, and recommendations on sustainable development issues at the global level. is the main United Nations platform responsible for following up and reviewing progress on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its 17 Sustainable Development Goals.

This edition focuses on “Reviewing Progress and Challenges in Financial Climate Resilience, Poverty Reduction and Inclusive Sustainable Development under 2030 Agenda” as a part of the 2030 Agenda of the HLPF. The nature of the topic calls for utmost focus and sensitivity as well as empathy towards the cause. We recommend that you go through this entire comprehensive Study Guide, and use the external links provided for further research any questions you come up with can be posed to us in the first session of the conference. We strongly encourage you to conduct your research as this Study Guide can merely provide you with a background to an infinite amount of knowledge and information that you can get on this particular agenda. Remember, research is the pillar on which the structure of a successful delegation is built. Over the three days of the conference, we anticipate high-quality debates. This would require a solution-oriented approach and constructive diplomatic dialogue with intrinsic determination to achieve feasible solutions.

Happy MUNing!

Sankalpa Chakraborty, Chairperson

2. The High-Level Political Forum (HLPF) & Its Structure

The High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development, commonly known as the HLPF, is the main United Nations platform responsible for following up and reviewing progress on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its 17 Sustainable Development Goals. It serves as the central body providing political leadership, guidance, and recommendations on sustainable development issues at the global level, ensuring that the world's collective commitments to the SDGs remain on track and receive sustained international attention.

The forum's origins trace back to the Rio+20 Conference of 2012, whose outcome document, "The Future We Want," called for the creation of a new, more effective mechanism for sustainable development follow-up. This led to the formal establishment of the HLPF through UN General Assembly Resolution 67/290 in 2013. In creating the HLPF, the UN effectively replaced the earlier Commission on Sustainable Development, which had existed since the 1992 Earth Summit but had come to be seen as lacking the political weight and dynamism needed to drive meaningful progress. Following the adoption of the 2030 Agenda in 2015, the HLPF became the primary global mechanism for reviewing SDG implementation.

At its core, the HLPF's mandate involves providing political leadership on sustainable development, following up and reviewing progress on SDG implementation worldwide, enhancing integration among the economic, social, and environmental dimensions of sustainable development, maintaining a focused and dynamic agenda that avoids duplicating discussions happening elsewhere in the UN system, and producing action-oriented outcomes that translate political will into practical commitments.

Structural Format: Two Levels

The HLPF operates in **two distinct formats**, depending on the year:

1. Annual Session Under ECOSOC (Ministerial Level)

- Convenes every year for **eight days** in **July**, at UN Headquarters in New York, including a **three-day ministerial segment**.
- Chaired by the **President of ECOSOC** (Economic and Social Council).

- Reviews a **specific set of SDGs** each year on a rotating thematic basis, plus **SDG 17** (partnerships), which is reviewed every year.
- Features **Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs)** — countries voluntarily present reports on their SDG progress.

2. Quadrennial Session Under the UN General Assembly (Summit Level)

- Convenes **every four years** at the level of **Heads of State and Government** (the "SDG Summit").
- Provides overarching political guidance for the full four-year review cycle.
- Sets the tone and direction for the ECOSOC-level sessions that follow.

In terms of institutional structure, the HLPF is supported by a Bureau composed of a President or Chair along with Vice-Chairs representing the UN's various regional groups, mirroring the structure of other ECOSOC subsidiary bodies. The Bureau plays a key role in organizing the agenda, steering negotiations, and coordinating engagement with member states and stakeholders. Sessions typically conclude with a negotiated Ministerial Declaration meant to capture collective political commitments, although reaching consensus on this text has proven difficult in some years. Administrative and substantive support for the forum is provided by the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs, particularly through its Division for Sustainable Development Goals.

Participation in the HLPF is universal, meaning all UN member states may take part, distinguishing it from smaller, restricted UN committees. Countries voluntarily submit themselves for review through the Voluntary National Review process, often drawing on national statistics and civil society input to inform their reports. Beyond national governments, the HLPF incorporates a structured mechanism for engagement by Major Groups and Other Stakeholders, allowing NGOs, businesses, local authorities, indigenous peoples, women's groups, youth organizations, trade unions, and other civil society actors to contribute to discussions. UN agencies, funds, and programs also feed technical expertise into the process, notably through publications such as the Global Sustainable Development Report.

Each annual HLPF session is organized around a specific theme and reviews a designated cluster of SDGs, with SDG 17 serving as a constant, cross-cutting element across every cycle. Finally, the HLPF operates within a broader institutional architecture, reporting to and functioning under the authority of both the UN General Assembly and ECOSOC, while working alongside regional forums on sustainable development that conduct preliminary SDG reviews at the regional level before feeding their findings into the global HLPF process.

1. AGENDA IN FOCUS: "Reviewing Progress and Challenges in Financial Climate Resilience, Poverty Reduction and Inclusive Sustainable Development under 2030 Agenda."

FINANCIAL CLIMATE RESILIENCE: PROGRESS AND CHALLENGES

Climate change has moved from being a peripheral environmental concern to a central issue for financial stability. Central banks, regulators, institutional investors, and insurers now recognize that a warming planet poses direct risks to balance sheets, asset values, and the smooth functioning of markets. This recognition has given rise to the concept of **financial climate resilience**: the capacity of financial institutions, markets, and systems to anticipate, absorb, adapt to, and recover from climate-related shocks, while continuing to support the real economy. Building this resilience is now understood as essential not only for protecting individual firms but for safeguarding the stability of the global financial system as a whole. Yet despite meaningful progress over the past decade, significant gaps remain between where financial resilience stands today and where it needs to be.

Financial climate resilience must be understood against the backdrop of two broad categories of risk. **Physical risks** arise from the direct impacts of climate change and extreme weather—floods, wildfires, droughts, hurricanes, and rising sea levels—which damage property, disrupt supply chains, and depress asset values in affected regions. These risks can be acute (a single catastrophic event) or chronic (gradual shifts such as changing precipitation patterns or long-term temperature increases).

Transition risks, by contrast, stem from the process of adjusting to a low-carbon economy. Policy changes, carbon pricing, technological disruption, and shifting consumer preferences can rapidly strand assets, particularly in carbon-intensive sectors such as fossil fuel extraction, heavy industry, and certain forms of agriculture. A financial system unprepared for this transition risks sudden, disorderly repricing of assets—sometimes referred to as a "climate Minsky moment"—which could trigger broader instability.

Layered on top of these are **systemic and cascading risks**: the way climate shocks can propagate through interconnected financial networks, insurance markets, and sovereign debt exposures, amplifying localized damage into wider economic disruption. Financial climate resilience, therefore, is not simply about individual institutions managing their own exposure, but about the resilience of the system as a whole.

Progress Achieved: One of the most significant developments has been the maturation of climate-related financial disclosure. The Task Force on Climate-related Financial Disclosures (TCFD), established in 2015, created a widely adopted framework encouraging companies to report on governance, strategy, risk management, and metrics related to climate risk. This framework has since been absorbed into the newer International Sustainability Standards Board (ISSB) standards, which aim to harmonize climate and broader sustainability disclosures into a single global baseline. Improved disclosure has given investors, regulators, and rating agencies far more visibility into corporate and financial exposure to climate risk than existed a decade ago.

Central banks and financial regulators have moved from treating climate change as a peripheral concern to integrating it into core supervisory functions. The Network for Greening the Financial System (NGFS), a coalition of central banks and supervisors, has developed shared climate scenarios now used widely in stress testing. Institutions such as the Bank of England, the European Central Bank, and the Federal Reserve have conducted climate stress tests and scenario analyses to assess how banks and insurers would fare under various warming and transition pathways. The Basel Committee on Banking Supervision has also begun incorporating climate risk considerations into international banking standards.

Financial markets have developed new instruments explicitly designed to fund climate adaptation and mitigation. Green bonds, sustainability-linked loans, and transition bonds have grown into a multi-trillion-dollar market, channeling capital toward renewable energy, energy efficiency, and climate adaptation projects. The EU Taxonomy and similar classification systems in other jurisdictions have attempted to bring greater clarity and consistency to what counts as a genuinely "green" or "sustainable" investment, reducing (though not eliminating) ambiguity for investors.

The insurance and reinsurance sectors have made notable advances in modeling and pricing climate risk, including the expanded use of catastrophe bonds and parametric insurance products that pay out based on predefined triggers (such as wind speed or rainfall thresholds) rather than lengthy loss assessments. These instruments have improved the speed and predictability of disaster response financing, particularly for governments and municipalities in climate-vulnerable regions.

Persistent Challenges: Despite improvements, climate risk modeling remains hampered by significant data limitations. Physical risk models struggle to capture localized, granular exposure—particularly for smaller firms, real estate, and infrastructure in developing economies where historical climate and asset data are sparse. Transition risk modeling faces its own uncertainty, as it depends on assumptions about future policy decisions, technological breakthroughs, and consumer behavior that are inherently difficult to forecast. Long-tail risks and tipping points—such as abrupt shifts in ocean currents or ice sheet collapse—are especially poorly captured by existing financial models, which tend to rely on historical patterns that may not hold in a rapidly changing climate.

While disclosure frameworks have proliferated, inconsistency across jurisdictions and reporting standards continues to complicate comparability. This has enabled forms of greenwashing, where financial products or corporate claims overstate genuine climate benefits. Investors and regulators are still developing the tools needed to verify claims and hold institutions accountable, and enforcement mechanisms remain uneven across countries.

Perhaps the starkest challenge is the mismatch between where climate finance is needed and where it currently flows. Developing countries and vulnerable regions —often those least responsible for historical emissions but most exposed to physical climate risks—continue to face a substantial financing gap for both adaptation and mitigation. Sovereign debt distress, higher borrowing costs linked to perceived climate risk, and limited access to international capital markets constrain these countries' ability to invest in resilience, creating a feedback loop where vulnerability begets higher costs of capital, which in turn constrains resilience-building investment.

Financial markets are often criticized for prioritizing short-term returns over the long-horizon thinking that climate risk management requires. Quarterly earnings pressures, compensation structures tied to short-term performance, and the long time horizons over which many climate risks materialize create a structural misalignment between market incentives and the kind of patient capital needed for resilience-building investment.

As climate-related disasters grow more frequent and severe, insurers in some high-risk regions have begun retreating from markets altogether—withdrawing coverage or dramatically raising premiums for wildfire-prone or flood-prone areas. This growing "protection gap" leaves households, businesses, and even local governments increasingly exposed, undermining the very resilience that insurance markets are meant to provide, and shifting risk back onto individuals and the public sector.

Finally, the political landscape surrounding climate policy remains volatile. Shifts in government priorities, uneven international coordination, and the politicization of environmental, social, and governance (ESG) investing in some jurisdictions have introduced additional uncertainty into long-term climate finance planning, complicating institutions' ability to plan multi-decade resilience strategies with confidence.

Building genuine financial climate resilience will require continued progress on several fronts. Data infrastructure needs further investment, particularly in regions currently underserved by climate risk models. Regulatory harmonization across jurisdictions can reduce compliance burdens and close loopholes that enable greenwashing. Blended finance mechanisms—combining public, private, and multilateral capital—offer one promising avenue for closing the climate finance gap in developing economies, de-risking investments enough to attract private capital at scale. Insurance markets may need new public-private partnership models to maintain coverage in high-risk areas without simply transferring the burden onto taxpayers. And embedding climate risk more deeply into mainstream financial regulation and reporting will help correct the misalignment between short-term market incentives and long-term resilience needs.

POVERTY REDUCTION: PROGRESS AND CHALLENGES

Poverty reduction has long stood at the heart of global development efforts, formally enshrined as the very first of the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDG 1): to end poverty in all its forms, everywhere, by 2030. Over the past three decades, the world has achieved genuine and historic progress in lifting people out of extreme deprivation. Yet as the 2030 deadline draws closer, the United Nations' own data reveal a sobering truth: progress has stalled, become uneven, and in some respects reversed. This essay examines both the remarkable gains achieved and the persistent, often deepening, challenges that stand between the world and a poverty-free future—drawing on the latest findings from the UN's *Sustainable Development Goals Report 2025*.

Extreme poverty is measured internationally through the World Bank's International Poverty Line, a benchmark used by the UN to track SDG 1. In 2025, the World Bank revised this line upward from $2.15 to $3.00 per person per day, at 2021 purchasing power parity, to better reflect the true cost of a basic standard of living. This technical revision—while not indicating that the world has become poorer, increased extreme poverty estimates by 125 million people, illustrating how even the definition of poverty is a moving target shaped by evolving data and methodology.

Progress Achieved: The long-run story of poverty reduction remains one of humanity's genuine achievements. In 1990, roughly 2 billion people—a much larger share of the global population—lived below the international poverty line, but extreme poverty was reduced significantly in the following decades, and the Millennium Development Goal of halving extreme poverty was achieved five years ahead of schedule. Under the newly revised $3.00 poverty line, 1.5 billion people escaped poverty between 1990 and 2022, compared to 1.3 billion under the previous, lower threshold. This represents one of the most significant reductions in human deprivation in recorded history, driven substantially by rapid economic growth in parts of Asia.

Progress has been strongest in Asia. Rapid growth in countries such as China and India lifted millions out of poverty, and more recently, Eastern and South-Eastern Asia and Central and Southern Asia have made significant progress, cutting their shares of the working poor by half or more since 2015. These regional experiences demonstrate that sustained economic growth, paired with investment in human capital, can produce transformative results within a generation.

Social protection systems have expanded meaningfully. For the first time on record, more than half of the world's population (52.4 per cent) was covered by at least one social protection benefit in 2023, up from 42.8 per cent in 2015. Coverage for specific groups has grown substantially too, with old-age pensions now reaching 79.6 per cent of people above retirement age. This marks real institutional progress in building safety nets that can cushion vulnerable populations against economic shocks.

Progress is also visible in reducing vulnerability to disasters. The global disaster mortality rate per 100,000 population fell from 1.61 in 2005–2014 to 0.79 in 2014–2023, a reduction of more than 50 per cent, despite continued global population growth. This suggests that early-warning systems, infrastructure investment, and disaster preparedness efforts are yielding measurable benefits even as climate-related hazards increase in frequency.

Persisting Challenges: Despite this history of progress, the UN's 2025 assessment is stark. In 2025, an estimated 808 million people—or roughly 1 in 10 people worldwide—were living in extreme poverty, an upward revision driven by the updated poverty line. Globally, the nowcasted estimate projects extreme poverty at 10.0 per cent in 2026, only three percentage points lower than in 2015, an extraordinarily slow pace of decline given the scale of ambition behind SDG 1. Looking ahead, without a significant acceleration in effort, 8.9 per cent of the global population will still be living in extreme poverty by 2030, and only one in five countries is projected to have halved its national poverty rate by that deadline.

Much of this stagnation traces back to a series of overlapping global shocks. The COVID-19 pandemic caused extreme poverty to rise in 2020 for the first time in decades, reversing three years of global progress, with recovery proving especially slow in low-income countries. The pandemic and associated crises pushed an additional 73 million people into poverty in 2020 alone. Compounding this, official development assistance dropped by 7.1 per cent in 2024, with further cuts expected in 2025, undermining the very financing mechanisms poorer countries rely on for recovery.

Poverty has become increasingly concentrated in the world's most vulnerable places. By 2025, more than three-quarters of the global extreme poor will live in sub-Saharan Africa or in fragile and conflict-affected countries. Working poverty tells a similar story: in 2024, nearly 3 in 10 workers in the least developed countries and 2 in 10 workers in landlocked developing countries lived in extreme poverty, while in small island developing states, the working poverty rate actually rose from 8.9 per cent in 2015 to 9.5 per cent in 2024.

While social protection coverage has expanded globally, the gains are deeply unequal. High-income countries are approaching universal coverage at 85.9 per cent, and upper-middle-income countries have reached 71.2 per cent, but coverage in low-income countries stands at just 9.7 per cent—barely changed since 2015. Despite the milestone of over half the world's population now receiving some social protection, 3.8 billion people remain uncovered altogether. The UN estimates that guaranteeing basic social security floors in low- and middle-income countries would require an additional $1.4 trillion annually, equivalent to 3.3 per cent of their aggregate GDP in 2024.

Having a job remains no guarantee of escaping poverty. An estimated 284 million workers—7.9 per cent of the employed population—were living in extreme poverty in 2025, and although rates have declined since 2015, progress remains slow and uneven, with young people more than twice as likely as adults to be classified as working poor.Half of all people living in poverty worldwide are under the age of 18, underscoring how poverty disproportionately burdens children and threatens future generations' prospects.

Poverty is also reinforced by unequal access to land and formal assets. Based on data from 85 countries in 2022, while two-thirds of the population believe they have secure tenure rights to land, only 43 per cent of adults possess official land tenure documents—falling to just 15 per cent of adults in sub-Saharan Africa—leaving nearly 1.4 billion adults in developing regions excluded from formal land markets and mortgage-based finance. Gender gaps compound this exclusion: although women represent half of those who feel secure in their land rights, only 24 per cent of women hold legal land documents, accounting for just 3 in 10 of all documented landholders worldwide.

Perhaps the most fundamental constraint is financial. Debt servicing costs for low- and middle-income countries reached a record $1.4 trillion in 2023, while the overall SDG financing gap in developing countries is estimated at $4 trillion per year. These figures illustrate the scale of the mismatch between the resources needed to end poverty and those currently being mobilized—particularly as aid budgets shrink rather than grow.

Poverty rarely exists in isolation from other forms of hardship. The same 2025 UN assessment finds that nearly 1 in 11 people worldwide faced hunger in 2023, 2.2 billion people lacked safely managed drinking water in 2024, 3.4 billion lacked safely managed sanitation, and 1.12 billion people live in slums or informal settlements without basic services. These overlapping deprivations reinforce one another, making poverty reduction inseparable from progress on health, education, water, and housing.

INCLUSIVE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT UNDER 2030 AGENDA

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development was deliberately designed as an inclusive and interconnected framework, built on the guiding principle of "leaving no one behind." Its 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are not meant to be pursued in isolation but as a synergistic system, where progress in one area reinforces progress in others — for instance, reducing poverty (SDG 1) is closely tied to improvements in education (SDG 4), health (SDG 3), gender equality (SDG 5), and decent work (SDG 8). This interlinked design reflects the recognition that social, economic, and environmental challenges are deeply intertwined, and that fragmented, siloed policymaking often undermines long-term outcomes. Inclusivity within the Agenda is reflected in its universal applicability to all countries regardless of income level, its explicit focus on marginalized and vulnerable groups (including women, children, persons with disabilities, and those in conflict-affected or fragile states), and its emphasis on disaggregated data to ensure that national averages do not mask deep inequalities. At the same time, the Agenda encourages countries to identify synergies and trade-offs across goals — such as how climate action (SDG 13) can support or hinder poverty reduction depending on how it is implemented — so that policies are designed holistically rather than competing against one another. Ultimately, the strength of the 2030 Agenda lies in this dual commitment to inclusiveness and interconnectedness, recognizing that sustainable development can only be achieved when progress is shared broadly and when gains across different goals reinforce, rather than undermine, one another.

CASE STUDIES

Case Study 1: The Caribbean Catastrophe Risk Insurance Facility (CCRIF)

Established in 2007, the CCRIF is the world's first multi-country risk pooling facility, allowing Caribbean and Central American governments to purchase affordable parametric insurance against hurricanes, earthquakes, and excessive rainfall. Rather than waiting years for post-disaster loss assessments, payouts are triggered automatically once predefined weather or seismic thresholds are met, delivering funds to governments within days. This has allowed member states to maintain emergency liquidity and continue essential services immediately after catastrophic events. The model demonstrates how pooled, market-based risk transfer mechanisms can strengthen financial resilience for small, climate-vulnerable economies that would otherwise struggle to self-insure.

Case Study 2: Ethiopia's Productive Safety Net Programme (PSNP) Launched in 2005, Ethiopia's PSNP is one of Africa's largest social protection programs, providing cash or food transfers to chronically food-insecure households in exchange for participation in public works like soil conservation and road building. Unlike emergency aid, it offers predictable, multi-year support, helping households avoid selling productive assets during shocks. Studies have shown improvements in food security, asset accumulation, and resilience to drought among participants. The program illustrates how combining social protection with productive infrastructure investment can reduce chronic poverty while building community-level resilience, offering a model increasingly referenced in broader UN and World Bank poverty strategies.

Case Study 3: Rwanda's Integration of the 2030 Agenda Rwanda has been widely cited for embedding the SDGs directly into its national development planning, aligning its Vision 2050 strategy and sector-specific policies with SDG targets from the outset. The country prioritized disaggregated data collection to track progress among women, rural populations, and persons with disabilities, ensuring marginalized groups were not obscured by national averages. Cross-sectoral coordination linked health, education, gender equality, and economic growth initiatives, reflecting the Agenda's emphasis on synergy rather than siloed implementation. Rwanda's approach demonstrates how strong institutional coordination and inclusive data practices can translate the abstract principles of the 2030 Agenda into measurable, locally owned outcomes.

IMPORTANT INTERNATIONAL AGREEMENTS AND TREATIES

1. **The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (2015)** — Adopted by all UN member states, this is the overarching UN framework containing the 17 SDGs, including Goal 1 (No Poverty) and Goal 13 (Climate Action), with an explicit commitment to inclusivity and "leaving no one behind."

2. **Paris Agreement (2015)** — Adopted under the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), it commits signatories to limiting global warming and mobilizing climate finance, including support for adaptation and resilience-building in vulnerable and developing countries.

3. **UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC, 1992)** — The foundational treaty establishing the international legal basis for climate action, including provisions for financial and technological support to developing nations to build resilience.

4. **Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction (2015–2030)** — A UN framework focused on reducing disaster risk and losses, closely tied to financial and community resilience against climate-related hazards.

5. **Addis Ababa Action Agenda (2015)** — The outcome document of the Third International Conference on Financing for Development, establishing a global framework for financing the SDGs, including climate finance and poverty-reduction investment.

6. **International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR, 1966)** — A core UN human rights treaty affirming rights to an adequate standard of living, social security, and freedom from poverty, forming a legal foundation for inclusive development.

7. **Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD, 2006)** — A UN convention promoting the inclusion of persons with disabilities in development processes, directly supporting the "inclusive" dimension of the 2030 Agenda.

8. **Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW, 1979)** — Reinforces gender-inclusive development, underpinning SDG 5 and cross-cutting commitments to inclusive poverty reduction and climate resilience.

9. **Basel III Framework (Basel Committee on Banking Supervision)** — While not a UN treaty, this international regulatory framework increasingly incorporates climate-related financial risk into global banking standards, supporting financial system resilience.

10. **UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP, 2007)** — Affirms the rights of Indigenous peoples to participate in and benefit from development, land, and resources, reinforcing inclusive and equitable approaches to poverty reduction and climate resilience.

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