

Editorial

As this editorial is written, war has broken out in Europe. The current terrible crisis caused by the large scale aggression by Russia against Ukraine constitutes a clear violation of international law and a serious threat to the rules-based international order. It constitutes a direct threat to peace and stability on the continent and puts the most elementary human rights at risk. It also casts a dark cloud on the possibility of achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The dangers are real and reach far beyond the European continent. Global peace and security may be disrupted and many countries across the world are likely to be affected by the economic and social consequences of this act of aggression.

Russia's aggression against Ukraine comes at a time when most countries, including low-income and emerging economies, are still struggling to exit the pandemic or deal with its impacts. As this report shows, the pandemic has exacerbated a number of economic and social imbalances, and has made many goals and targets harder to achieve. Across the globe, the pandemic is causing long-term damage to job prospects and living standards, while putting pressure on the sources of public financing. Vulnerable populations have felt its impact the hardest. Young people, for instance, have been (and without appropriate action will continue to be) hit particularly hard by the crisis, meaning that the future is also at stake.

Governments' efforts to advance on the SDGs have not been in vain, however. Since the adoption of the 2030 Agenda in 2015, a majority of OECD countries have undertaken important steps to implement SDGs, as visible for instance in the progress made on promoting gender equality, curbing greenhouse gas emissions or reducing death from assault and homicides. Interestingly, almost all OECD countries adopted national strategies, policies and regulatory frameworks to increase their environmentally protected areas or to promote youth employment. Significant progress has also been made when it comes to measurement. Since the adoption of the SDGs, statistical gaps have been significantly reduced and we are now able to track almost 80% of targets, as opposed to less than half in 2016.

At this critical time, and despite the severe geopolitical, economic and social challenges that the world is facing, there are at least three reasons to be optimistic.

First, the violation of international law and possible violations of human rights in Ukraine have been met with a united response from democracies and countries across the world that share the same values as OECD countries. Manifestations of solidarity with Ukraine have come from all parts of the world and from all walks of life. Governments, citizens, civil society and corporates have all stood in support of the people of Ukraine and their democratically-elected government. This highlights a shared commitment to peace, the rule of law and strong and cohesive institutions, which are core to the SDGs.

Second, while COVID-19 found many governments and populations unprepared for a global crisis of this scale, the world as a whole has learnt from this ordeal. These lessons have been used to combat the pandemic more effectively and prevent even worse consequences from materialising. In the OECD area this can be seen, for instance, in the deployment of mass scale vaccination campaigns and in unprecedented fiscal responses. While the pandemic is not over, OECD countries' sanitary responses have continued to improve throughout the pandemic.

Third, in a long-term perspective looking beyond 2030, countries are taking active steps to handle the crucial common challenge that humanity faces: climate change. While this report shows that some of the SDGs are far from being achieved, such as on ocean acidification, marine debris and eutrophication or the loss of biodiversity, the momentum for international action is strong, as shown by the COP 26 outcomes as well as the recent developments of a global biodiversity framework at the Convention on Biological Diversity.

Opportunities to advance on SDGs are therefore many and shouldn't be wasted, given the short time left. To seize these opportunities, we need a rigorous understanding of where countries stand on the 2030 Agenda, how quickly they are advancing towards their goals and what should be the priorities for action. This is the purpose of the OECD report *The Short and Winding Road to 2030: Measuring Distance to the SDG Targets*, first published in 2016, and now in its fourth edition. The report is one of the main pillars of the OECD Council Action Plan on the SDGs and helps OECD countries to identify where they currently stand in relation to the SDG targets and where they need to be. It proposes sustainable pathways based on evidence. It reaffirms the OECD role as a leading source of expertise, data, good practices and standards in the economic, social and environmental areas of public policy that are relevant to SDGs. And it encourages a "race to the top" for better and more coherent policies that can help deliver on the SDGs through the use of hallmark OECD approaches. The OECD *Measuring Distance to the SDG Targets* report leverages high-quality statistics from the UN and OECD sources to provide a high-level assessment of OECD Member countries' performance across the Goals and Targets of the 2030 Agenda based on the indicators agreed internationally for global monitoring.

A sustainable future for all will not be possible without accurate information and data. This report is a testament to that.



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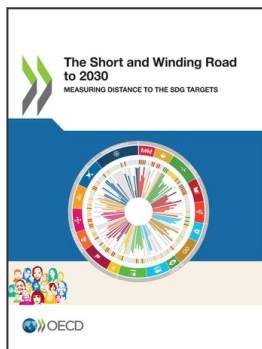
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