



The United Nations designates specific days, weeks, years and decades as occasions to mark particular events or topics to promote, through awareness and action, the objectives of the Organization. Usually, one or more Member States propose an observance the General Assembly establishes them with a resolution. Occasionally, these celebrations are declared by the specialized agencies of the United Nations (e.g., UNESCO, UNICEF, FAO...) when they concern issues that fall within the scope of their competencies. Some may then be adopted by the General Assembly.

The first International Decade was the United Nations Development Decade from 1960-1970, and called on all Member States to intensify their efforts to mobilize support for measures required to accelerate progress toward self-sustaining economic growth and social advancement in developing countries, many of which were in the process of gaining independence from European colonial powers. Unfortunately, the goal of a 5% growth rate was unattainable in developing countries, mainly due to high rates of population increase.

Since then, a large number of International Decades covering a very broad range of action areas have been established; some are renewing in that, when the original decade relating to that particular action has ended, a second (and even third or fourth) International Decade is established: for example, 2011-2020 saw the Third International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism.

What particular areas / action topics include 2022 in their 'decade'?



2022-2032 – International Decade of Indigenous Languages

This is a direct outcome of the 2019 International Year of Indigenous Languages and is a unique opportunity to raise awareness of the importance of indigenous languages for sustainable development, peace-building and reconciliation in our societies, as well as to mobilize stakeholders and resources around the world to support and promote indigenous languages worldwide. There are more than 8000 languages – written and spoken – across the world. Australia alone has over 250 indigenous languages and 800 dialects. www.en.unesco.org/idil2022-2032

One of the major initial steps has been the development of the UNESCO World Atlas of Languages:

- www.unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000380132



2021-2030 – Second Decade of Action for Road Safety

The WHO and UN, in cooperation with other partners in the UN Road Safety Collaboration, have developed a Global Plan, with the ambitious target of preventing at least 50% of road traffic deaths and injuries by 2030.

www.who.int/teams/social-determinants-of-health/safety-and-mobility/decade-of-action-for-road-safety-2021-2030

The Global Plan aligns with the Stockholm Declaration by emphasizing an holistic approach to road safety through continued improvements in the design of roads and vehicles; enhancement of laws and law enforcement; and the provision of timely, life-saving emergency care for the injured. In addition, the Global Plan reflects the promotion of walking, cycling and using public transport as inherently healthy and environmentally-sound modes of transport.

What can people do in themselves to make roads safer?

- Drive less where appropriate and use alternative means of transport;
- All road users – drivers; cyclists and pedestrians – need to obey the rules. With few exceptions, roads are open to all users and each has a duty of care to themselves and others. When driving, keep to the speed limit.
- Careful journey planning and the avoidance of distractions to reduce stress and anxiety.
- Keep vehicles in good mechanical condition. Ensure they are serviced regularly, and new tyres and brakes fitted when appropriate. Many countries fix a minimum tread depth on the tyre, at which the tyre needs to be replaced. This is often 1.6mm. However, many organisations recommend replacing tyres at 3mm tread depth. This is because tests have shown that it can take up to two cars length further to stop on a wet road with just 1.6mm of tread, compared to tyres of 3mm of tread.



2021-2030 – United Nations Decade of Healthy Aging

www.decadeofhealthyageing.org

The UN Decade of Healthy Aging is a global collaboration that brings together diverse sectors and stakeholders including governments, civil society, international organisations, professionals, academic institutions, the media and private sector to improve the lives of older people, their families and communities.

There are four interconnected action areas:

1. Changing how we think, feel and act towards age and aging;
2. Developing communities in ways that foster the abilities of older people;
3. Delivering person-centred integrated care and primary health services responsive to older people; and
4. Providing older people who need it with access to long-term care.

Simple actions, such as talking to older neighbours and family members, can make an amazing impact on peoples' well-being.

More fundamental changes in societal attitudes and perceptions will require more innovative approaches.



2021-2030 – United Nations Decade on Ecosystem Restoration - www.decadeonrestoration.org

People and the planet are only as healthy as the ecosystems we all depend on. Bringing degraded ecosystems back to life (planting trees; cleaning up riverbanks, or simply giving nature the space to recover) increases their benefits to society and biodiversity. However, ecosystems are complex and highly varied, and their restoration needs careful planning and patient implementation.

How to get involved in ecosystem restoration?

- Take action such as starting or supporting on-the-ground restoration projects.
- Making smarter choices like buying only sustainable products and changing diets
- Raising your voice in support of ecosystem conservation and restoration.

There is a useful guide free to download to help with ecosystem restoration:

- www.decadeonrestoration.org/publications/ecosystem-restoration-playbook-practical-guide-healing-planet.

Some current projects include:

Gondwana Link in Australia www.gondwanalink.org. This is a project to reconnect various ecosystems across south-western Australia, stretching from the wet forests in the south-west corner to the dry woodlands and mallee bordering the Nullarbor Plain. Over 16,000 ha of rural properties have been purchased to date, and some 13,500 ha of marginal farmland restored back to habitat.

In Borneo, for example, 620 ha have been placed under restoration in an ambitious tree-planting programme, with a goal for 1,500 ha over the next five years. Tree-planting has a number of benefits, including: acting as a carbon sink; providing crucial habitats for diverse animals, plants, fungi and bacteria; helps reduce soil degradation and loss by reducing the effects of wind and rain on bare soil; and providing livelihoods and cultural connections to forest peoples.



2021-2030 – United Nations Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development

www.oceandecade.org

The Vision for the decade is 'the science we need for the ocean we want'. To get to the ocean we want, seven Decade Outcomes have been listed:

- A clean ocean where pollution sources are identified and reduced or removed.
- A healthy and resilient ocean where marine ecosystems are understood, protected, restored and managed
- A productive ocean supporting sustainable food supply and a sustainable ocean economy.
- A predicted ocean where society understands and can respond to changing ocean conditions.
- A safe ocean where life and livelihoods are protected from ocean-related hazards.
- An accessible ocean with open and equitable access to data, information, technology and innovation.
- An inspiring and engaging ocean where society understands and values the ocean in relation to human wellbeing and sustainable development.

Some actions already started include:

- Installation of nanotechnology artificial reefs to help restore hurricane-damaged reefs in the waters around Sint Maarten. This project was begun in 2018. Initial results have found that the artificial reefs deployed supported almost 100% cover of plant and animal species on all substrates, which is significantly higher than on the nearby natural reef.
- Similarly, off Nova Scotia, 16 Reefship Modules and over 250 IntelliReef dome have been installed to help restore kelp forests, oyster bed and near-shore fisheries.

Both of these projects have been undertaken by IntelliReefs (www.intellireefs.com).

- The University of Western Australia has developed MegaMove; a global scientific initiative involving a concerted network of researchers around the world to advance the long-term conservation of marine megafauna using movement ecology, ecological modelling, statistical physics, oceanography, marine law and computer data science.
- The Sydney Institute of Marine Science is developing Animal-Borne Ocean Sensors (AniBOS) to record data in remote parts of the ocean.

2019-2028 – Nelson Mandela Decade of Peace. In declaring the decade from 2019-2028 as the Nelson Mandela Decade of Peace, the United Nations recognises the late Mr Mandela for his humility, forgiveness and compassion, and acknowledges his contribution towards the struggle for democracy and the promotion of a culture of peace throughout the world. www.un.org/en/events/mandeladay/decade_of_peace.shtml.

Peace, security, development and human rights are the pillars of the United Nations system, and foundations for collective security and well-being. These link with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Racism, xenophobia and related intolerance represent the very opposites of the purposes of the United Nations. The protection of children, and protection of populations from genocide, war crimes ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity (including the elimination of nuclear weapons).

Whilst it can be argued that governments need to resolve their differences and work together to accomplish the aims of the United Nations, everyone is able to show forgiveness and compassion, and refrain from racism and related intolerance.



2019-2028 – United Nations Decade of Family Farming

www.fao.org/family-farming-decade/home/en/

The Decade of Family Farming aims to show what it means to be a family farmer in a rapidly changing world and highlights the importance of family farms in eradicating hunger and ensuring future food supplies.

Family farming offers a unique opportunity to ensure food security, improve livelihoods, better manage natural resources, protect the environment and achieve sustainable development; all of which link to other International Decades and Years.

- Family farms produce more than 80% of the world's food.
- 90% of fishers are small-scale.
- Family farms occupy 70-80% of the world's farmland
- Women only hold 15% of the farmland but supply 50% of the labour to farm it.
- 90% of family farms are run by an individual or family who rely primarily on family labour.
- 33% of forests are managed by indigenous peoples and local communities.
- There are over 600 million farms in the world.

Simple actions to help family farms is to try and buy direct from the farmer and support those farmers growing and harvesting in environmentally-sustainable ways.



2018-2028 – International Decade for Action “Water for Sustainable Development”

www.un.org/en/events/waterdecade/

Access to water and sanitation is a precondition to life and a declared human right, yet 2.1 billion people lack access to safely managed drinking water services, and 4.5 billion people safely managed sanitation services. 80% of wastewater flows back to the ecosystem without treatment or reuse.

The objectives of the Decade focus on the sustainable development and integrated management of water resources for the achievement of social, economic and environmental objectives, including those contained in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

In addition, promotion of efficient water usage and the importance of the participation and full involvement of all stakeholders.

2018-2027 – Third United Nations Decade for the Eradication of Poverty

- www.un.org/development/desa/socialperspectiveondevelopment/united-nations-decade-for-the-eradication-of-poverty/third

Whilst it might be viewed that having to have a third decade for the eradication of poverty is a failure, there have been some successes.

Economic growth across developing countries has been remarkable since 2000, with faster growth in gross domestic product per capita than advanced countries, which has helped fuel poverty reduction and improvements in living standards. In 1990, 1.867 billion people lived on less than \$1.9 per day; by 2013, this number had fallen to 783 million, despite an increase in World population from 5.28 billion to 7.17 billion during the same period.

Achievements have also been recorded in job creation, gender equality, education and health care, social protection measures, agriculture and rural development, and climate change adaptation and mitigation.

Unfortunately, poverty rates are still too high in many countries; particularly sub-Saharan Africa. To eradicate poverty by 2030, 110 million people per year will need to be pulled across the \$1.90 threshold.

This also begs the question whether \$1.90 is still too little. What should a global minimum living rate be? \$5 per day? \$10?



2016-2025 – United Nations Decade of Action on Nutrition - www.un.org/nutrition/home

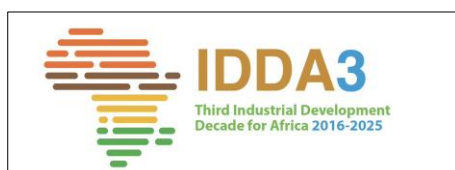
The UN Decade of Action on Nutrition is a commitment by Member States to undertake 10 years of sustained and coherent implementation of policies, programmes and

increased investments to eliminate malnutrition in all its forms, everywhere.

The decade aligns with UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 2 and 3.

Some of the progress already made includes:

- Recognition of agroecology and biodiversity; increased consideration of sustainability issues in national food-based dietary guidelines; implementation of measures to reduce food loss and food waste and action to enhance resilience of the food supply chain in crisis-prone areas. In addition, measures to reduce or eliminate industrially-produced trans fats have been accelerated and reformulation of food processing to reduce salt content.
- To accelerate progress on wasting in children under 5, a UN Global Action Plan on Child Wasting (refers to a **child who is too thin for his or her height**) is under development.
- Identification of inadequate training provision of nutrition professionals, and dissemination of knowledge, particularly in schools.
- Realisation that agri-food industries produce environmentally-unsustainable foods high in unhealthy fats, sugars and/or salt.
- Trade/investment policies are influencing malnutrition and higher consumption of foods and drinks high in sugars, unhealthy fats and salt. Coca Cola and McDonalds are everywhere.



2016-2025 – Third Industrial Development Decade for Africa (IDDA III)

www.unido.org/who-we-are/idda3

Since 2000, the continent of Africa has recorded impressive rates of economic growth, although, as mentioned above, poverty remains very high. Development assistance – particularly in the last few years from China – has helped in stimulating economic

development, as well as continued requirements for commodities from various African countries – such as precious metals used in telecommunications and new ‘clean’ technologies.

Industrialization is a reliable force in steering economic diversification, but needs to be socially-inclusive and environmentally-sustainable. It is this that the IDDA III hopes to achieve.

One example is the use of solar-powered tablets in Mozambique to educate rural communities about COVID-19, HIV, general health, vaccinations, civic education, contraception and financial education, by using The Community Tablet.

The Community Tablet is a container consisting of four to six large LCD screens, powered by solar panels and transported by trailer. The trailer can be pulled by donkey. Originally diesel-powered, the United Nations Industrial Development Organisation funded the transformation from diesel to solar power.

Presentations are customisable to be relevant to the needs of each local community that it visits.



**International Decade for People of African Descent
2015-2024**

2015-2024 – International Decade for People of African Descent

www.un.org/en/observances/decade-people-african-descent

The international community recognizes that people of African descent represent a distinct group whose human rights must be promoted and protected.

There are three major areas for action:

- Recognition
 - The right to equality and non-discrimination
 - Education on equality and awareness-raising
 - Information gathering
 - Participation and inclusion
- Justice
 - Access to justice
 - Special measures
- Development
 - Right to development and measures against poverty
 - Education
 - Health
 - Housing

The biggest hurdle is the racial stereotyping that still persists in some sectors of society about ‘African’ people. This shows ignorance and must be addressed.

Holding multicultural events in your community to engage with people of different cultures and backgrounds is one way to engage and understand about others.

2014-2024 – United Nations Decade of Sustainable Energy for All

www.un.org/millenniumgoals/pdf/SEFA.pdf

Sustainable development needs sustainable energy. Three billion people rely on wood, coal, charcoal or animal waste for cooking and heating, whilst 1 in 5 still lacks access to electricity.

Inefficient energy production and use harms economic productivity and causes environmental degradation (most notably, through greenhouse gas emissions leading to rapid warming of the planet). Thus, energy needs to be accessible, cleaner and more efficient.

Sustainable energy provides new opportunities for growth through new job creation and markets. Education can occur after dark; clinics can provide more reliable and more comprehensive treatments.

The Sustainable Energy for All initiative has three objectives:

1. Ensure universal access to modern energy services.
2. Double the global rate of improvement in energy efficiency.
3. Double the share of renewable energy in the global energy mix.

In 2020, renewable energy use increased 3% as demand for all other fuels declined. Electricity generation from renewable sources grew 7%.

Whilst still costly, domestic solar systems for instance do provide an opportunity to help generate energy for both domestic consumption and feeding into the grid. Whilst the feed-in tariffs have declined compared to years ago, they are still worth considering. Coupling with a battery back-up system could help homeowners drastically reduce their use of centrally-produced energy.

Conclusion:

Given the large number of International Decades (and International Years) that have been initiated, what has actually been accomplished?

Some may argue nothing, because of the need to keep having International Decades and Years for particular issues.

However, that is a simplistic view as knowledge, awareness and understanding develops, so too does the need to keep the topic in the public domain. As an example, progress made during the previous Decade of Action for Road Safety 2011-2020 laid the foundation for the years ahead, with its achievements being:

- The inclusion of road safety on the global health and development agenda
- Broad dissemination of scientific guidance on what works
- Strengthening of partnership and networks
- Mobilization of resources.

International Decades do have an important role to play in making people aware of what needs to be done, what can be done, and what has been done.

The biggest issue is that the successes are not publicised enough.