



Concept Note for Panellists

Financing the SDGs Dialogue: Advancing Country-Led Approaches

Panel 1 - SDG Progress: The Road to 2030 and Beyond

Date and time	Day 1 – 27 of October 2026 9:00-10:30
Location	Madrid – Hotel Meliá (Avenida América)
Organisers	UNDP – Government of Spain
In-person registration	Link
Virtual Registration link	Webinar Registration - Zoom

Background

As the international community approaches 2030, the urgency of accelerating progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals has never been greater. While the SDGs remain the shared global framework for sustainable development, progress has been uneven across countries and goals. According to the *Sustainable Development Goals Report 2026*, only 36 per cent of SDG targets with available trend data are on track or making moderate progress, while nearly half are advancing too slowly and 15 per cent have regressed. At the same time, important gains in areas such as health, access to electricity, water and digital connectivity demonstrate that progress is possible. The challenge now is to build on these achievements, understand what has worked, and accelerate implementation in the years remaining to 2030.

Against this backdrop, **Financing the SDGs Dialogue 2026: Advancing Country-Led Approaches to Financing Sustainable Development** will take place from 27 to 29 October 2026 in Madrid, Spain, hosted by the UNDP Sustainable Finance Hub together with the Government of Spain. Building on the Sevilla Commitment and the launch of the Sevilla Platform for Action, the Dialogue will provide a space for countries and development partners to exchange experiences, address



implementation challenges and strengthen the financing strategies and partnerships needed to translate national development priorities into concrete results.

As the **high-level opening panel of the Dialogue**, this session will take stock of the current state of development and explore what is needed to accelerate SDG progress by 2030. Bringing together perspectives from the Global South, national governments, international development finance, climate diplomacy, the private sector and academia, the discussion will reflect on the lessons of SDG implementation to date, the opportunities to build on successful approaches, and the policies and investments that can drive more inclusive, resilient and sustainable development.

The panel will explore how national planning and public investment can translate into better development outcomes, how international financing and cooperation can support country-led priorities, and how trade and private-sector partnerships can also contribute to accelerating progress. Drawing on both practical country experiences and research evidence, it will also consider how development progress can be better understood and assessed, beyond economic growth alone. By connecting the development outcomes countries seek with the financing, institutions and partnerships needed to achieve them, the session will set a forward-looking, action-oriented framework for the rest of the Dialogue.

Positioning within the Dialogue

Thematic area / sector	SDG progress; accelerating country-led implementation to 2030; financing and partnerships
Related SPA initiative(s)	N/A

Objectives

The primary objectives of this session include:

- Identify where SDG progress can be accelerated by 2030 and learn from approaches already delivering results.
- Explore country-led policy, planning and institutional reforms that turn national priorities into implementation.



- Consider how financing and evidence, including Beyond GDP measures, can better guide investments and track outcomes.
- Highlight practical partnerships among governments, development institutions, businesses, academia and civil society that can scale results.

Proposed Speakers

Proposed panellists:

- **Margarita Gómez**, Executive Director, Southern Voice
- **Ahmed Rostom**, Minister of Planning and Economic Development, Egypt
- **Taolo Boipuso Lucas**, Member of Parliament, National Assembly, Botswana
- **Clémence Landers**, Vice President and Senior Fellow, Center for Global Development (CGD)
- **Marta Blanco Quesada**, Chair of the International Relations Committee, CEOE, Spain

Moderator: George Molina Grey, Chief Economist, United Nations Development Programme

Guiding Questions

Each panellist will address one high-level question in an eight-minute opening intervention (order TBC).

Guiding Questions

- **Margarita Gómez – Southern Voice:** Drawing on researchers and policy thinkers across the Global South, what should the international community learn from uneven SDG progress, and how can countries and communities help accelerate implementation towards 2030?
- **H.E. Dr. Ahmed Rostom – Egypt:** From Egypt's experience of national economic planning, how can governments ensure that economic growth and public investment translate into improved development outcomes, beyond GDP?
- **Taolo Boipuso Lucas – Botswana:** How can parliaments help make sure public spending delivers real results for people and keep governments accountable for SDG progress?
- **Clémence Landers – Center for Global Development:** In a world of constrained aid, mounting debt pressures and changing multilateral finance, what kind of international



financing system is needed to deliver an ambitious, people-centred development agenda by 2030?

- **Marta Blanco Quesada – CEOE:** Where can businesses contribute most to accelerating SDG investment and delivery?

Proposed Agenda

90 minutes (09:00–10:30).

TIME	SESSION	SPEAKERS
5 min	Opening and framing. Introduce practical priorities for accelerating SDG implementation by 2030.	Moderator
60 min (incl. buffer times)	Opening interventions. Five panellists respond to one short, tailored question each (8 minutes per person)	Five proposed panellists (subject to confirmation)
20 min	Audience perspectives (if time allows)	All participants
5 min	Closing synthesis. Highlight actionable lessons and link the panel to subsequent sessions on country-led financing.	Moderator

Participants (audience)

- Senior government representatives, including Ministries of Finance, Planning, Economy, Foreign Affairs and Development Cooperation, as well as Permanent Missions and other high-level country representatives.
- Senior representatives of public and private financial institutions, commercial banks, development banks, institutional investors and other private-sector actors.
- Leadership and senior representatives from UN entities, multilateral and bilateral development institutions, IFIs and development cooperation agencies.
- Senior representatives from civil society organisations and networks working on sustainable development, inclusion and accountability.



- Relevant Spanish government institutions, financial-sector representatives, academia, think tanks and other national partners engaged in the Dialogue.
- Academics, think tanks, research institutions and development practitioners.



ANNEX 1. PANELLISTS

• Margarita Gómez

Executive Director, Southern Voice



Southern Voice, Executive Director

Margarita Gómez is the Executive Director of Southern Voice, a network of 70 thinktanks from Africa, Latin America and Caribbean, and Asia. Previously, Gómez founded and led two policy-impact innovation centres, the People in Government Lab at the Blavatnik School of Government at Oxford University, United Kingdom, and the Behavioural Unit at CIDE in Mexico. She was also an advisor to Mexico's Public Security and Defence Ministers. Gómez has more than 15 years of experience working with governments, international organizations and world-class universities, delivering context and policy-relevant research. Her research focuses on financial and gender inclusion, integrity and ethics in governments, public security, and public sector transformation. She is a Visiting Fellow at the Blavatnik School of Government at Oxford, a Senior Research Fellow at the Public Management and Innovation Lab, and a Behavioural Advisor at the Asian Development Bank.

• H.E. Dr. Ahmed Rostom

Minister of Planning and Economic Development (Egypt)



Dr. Ahmed Rostom is a distinguished economist and international development leader with more than 28 years of experience in financial sector reform, private sector development, and economic policy. He currently serves as Minister of Planning and Economic Development of the Arab Republic of Egypt.

Before assuming his ministerial role, Dr. Rostom built a distinguished international career at the World Bank, where he served as a Senior Financial and Private Sector Specialist. In this capacity, he led major development finance initiatives across Africa, the Middle East, and Asia, working closely with governments, regulators, and private sector stakeholders to design and implement reforms that strengthen financial systems and stimulate economic growth. His work focused on expanding access to finance, mobilizing infrastructure investment, supporting the growth of small and medium-sized enterprises, advancing financial inclusion, and promoting climate smart investment strategies. Known for combining strategic policy vision with practical implementation, Dr. Rostom has played a key role in shaping programs that translate economic policy into measurable development outcomes.

Dr. Rostom holds a Ph.D. in Economics from George Washington University, an M.Sc. in Economic and Social Policy Analysis from the University of York, and both B.Sc. and M.Sc. degrees in Economics from Cairo University's Faculty of Economics and Political Science. He has also completed executive education programs at the University of Cambridge, the Wharton School, and Harvard University. A published researcher, his work has appeared in outlets including the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development and the World Bank Policy Research Series.



• **Honourable Taolo Boipuso Lucas**
Member of Parliament, National Assembly (Botswana)



National Assembly, Member of Parliament (Botswana)

Taolo Boipuso Lucas is a Member of Botswana's National Assembly representing the Bobirwa constituency. A veteran politician and former Vice President of the Botswana Congress Party (BCP), he is recognized for his work on parliamentary oversight, public accountability and governance issues. He has served in Parliament since 2019.

• **Clémence Landers**
Vice President and Senior Fellow, Center for Global Development (CGD)



Clemence Landers is vice president and senior fellow at the Center for Global Development, as well as a trustee on the Center for Global Development Europe's board of trustees.

Prior to joining CGD, she worked at the US Treasury Department on US engagement with the multilateral development banks and as a desk economist covering several countries in the Middle East and North Africa region. Later, she served as an Advisor to the US Executive Director at the World Bank where she worked on the replenishment of the International Development Association (IDA) and represented the US government on several board committees. After leaving the Bank, she joined the Tony Blair Institute for Global Change where she led the organization's expansion into Francophone West Africa.



Before joining the US government, Landers had a Scott Family Liberia Fellowship and served as an Advisor to the Liberian Finance Minister under Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf. In this capacity she worked on Liberia's landmark debt relief agreement and a range of economic policy issues.

Landers holds degrees from Sciences Po and Cornell University.

• **Marta Blanco Quesada**

Chair of the International Relations Committee, CEOE (Spain)



Member of the senior body of State Commercial Technicians and Economists since 1992, with a solid academic background in Business Administration, Political Science and an MBA.

Throughout her professional career, she has held various high-level institutional positions in the field of international economic relations, including Director of the Cabinet of the Secretary of State for Trade, Deputy Director General of Trade Policy for the European Union, Director of Promotion at ICEX, Deputy Director General of External Debt and Project Evaluation, and member of the board of directors of the Inter-American Development Bank, based in Washington, among others. In the field of tourism, she has held key roles as Director General of Turespaña and Director General of Tourism for the Community of Madrid. She has been a member of the Boards of Directors of ICEX, AENA, CESCE and PYMAR, and has led important initiatives in both internationalisation and tourism.

Since 2019, she has been chair of the CEOE's International Relations Committee and director of the CEOE's International and Multilateral Organisations Department, responsibilities she combines with the BusinessEurope International Relations Committee, co-chair of the MENA-OECD Business Advisory Board, vice-chair of the Business at OECD Trade Committee, Spanish representative to the B20, and member of the Higher Council for Cooperation for Sustainable Development and Global Solidarity, the ICEX Strategic Guidance Council, the CUNEF advisory board, the EJE&CON advisory board and the Spanish chapter of the European Council for Foreign Relations (ECFR) think tank.