



SDG
Investment fair

Participation guidelines for countries

2025



**United
Nations**

Department of
Economic and
Social Affairs



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I. INTRODUCING THE SDG INVESTMENT FAIR

The SDG Investment Fair was launched in 2018 as a UN platform to promote investment in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) via peer learning, information exchange, and partnerships. Initially an annual event, the Fair has since evolved into a continuous platform. While SDG investment is growing, it is at a slow pace: the investment gap is \$4 trillion, up from \$2.5 in 2015. The Fair is instrumental in efforts to close this gap.

The Fair fills a gap in the marketplace as an inclusive space for countries and investors to network, exchange knowledge and kickstart engagements around investable opportunities in the SDGs. To date, 25 countries have presented over 140 projects worth more than USD 66 billion, many of which have advanced towards implementation.

UN-DESA serves as the Secretariat for the Fair. It partners with Resident Coordinator Offices to identify projects and prepare countries for the Fair and to ensure that local UN insights from the ground up filter up to global dialogues on private finance.

In brief, the Fair serves to advance:

Partnerships and networking

- Participants include investors and bankers, government officials, civil society, and UN representatives who connect to identify roadblocks and actions needed to scale up private investment for the SDGs.
- Countries benefit from showcasing concrete investment-ready projects and presenting themselves as potential SDG investment destinations to a group of investors and development partners.
- Investors gain early access to information about high-impact projects, including public-private partnerships.

Peer learning

- In spotlighting successful transactions, the Fair facilitates the sharing of innovative approaches, business models, and instruments that enabled fruitful partnerships to advance the 2030 Agenda at the country level.
- Countries deepen their understanding of financing methods and risk mitigation strategies to advance more bankable SDG project pipelines.

Capacity Building on SDG investment project preparation and financing

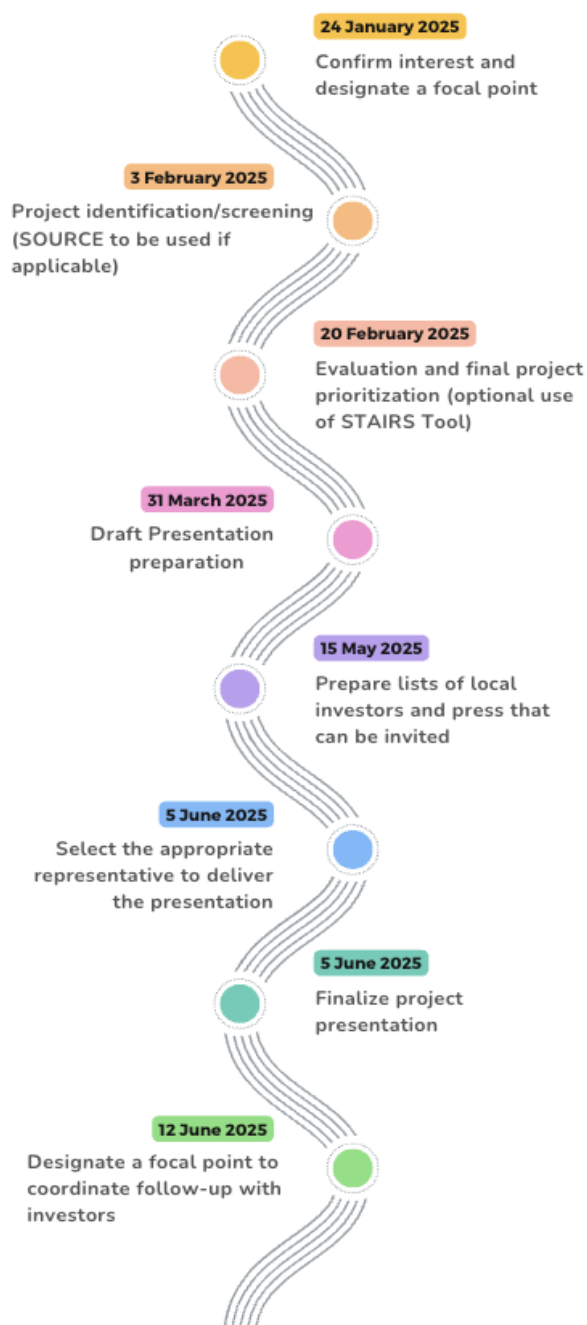
- Customized training and workshops improve participating countries' project quality and financing readiness. Training focuses on investment essentials and financing structures like blended finance, thematic SDG bonds issuance, and risk mitigation.
- Enhances the country representatives' skills of project development and raises the importance of creating SDG project pipelines.

The United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN-DESA) serves as the Secretariat for the Fair. It partners with Resident Coordinator Offices to ensure that all UN Country Teams (all entities representing the UN within a country) can contribute their insights and can be called upon to collaborate with DESA on effectively preparing countries throughout the process. Likewise, UN Country Teams are expected to provide input on the SDG-aligned investment

projects being developed locally and how the Fair can promote and advance their further development.

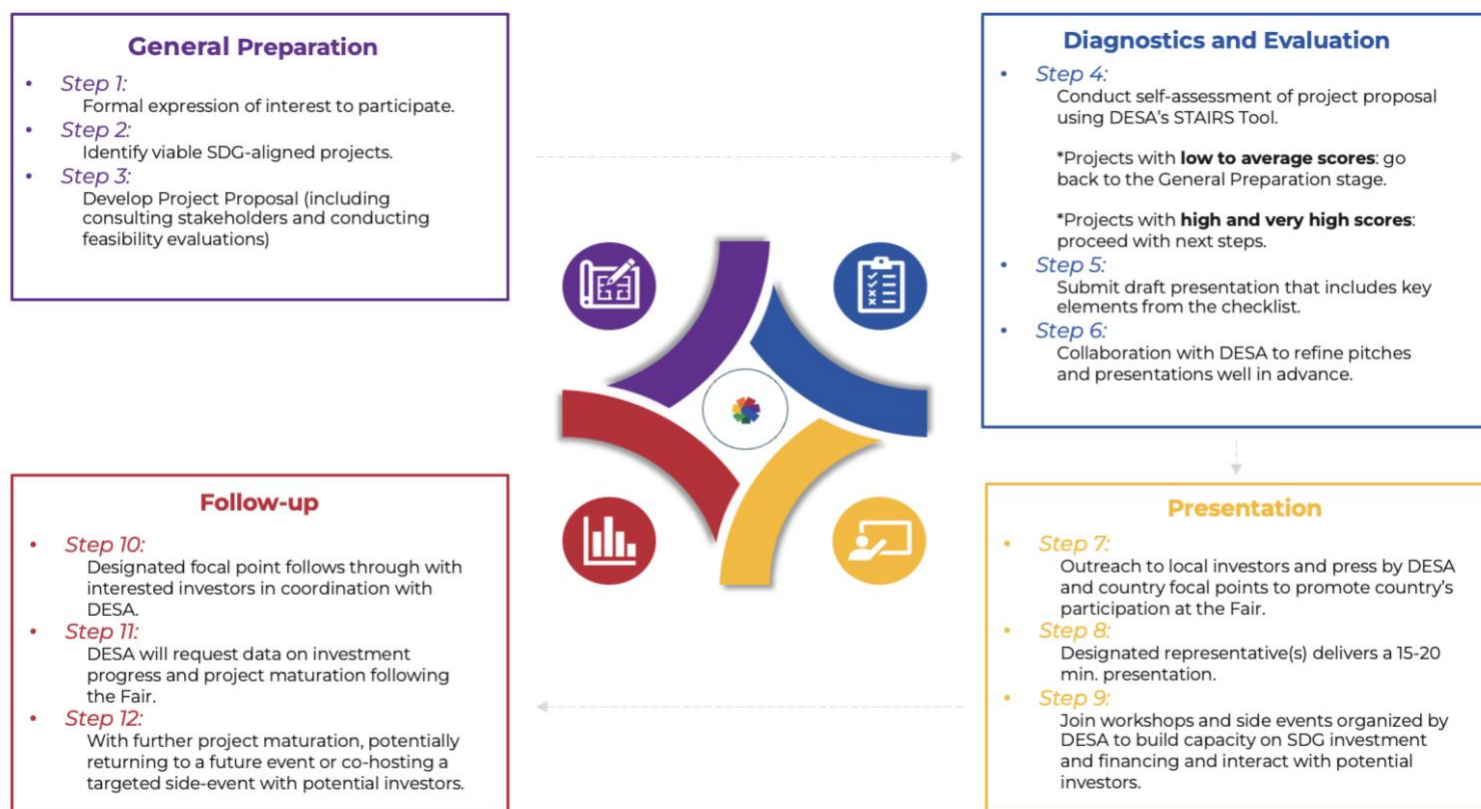
DESA is also partnering with other actors such as the Sustainable Infrastructure Foundation, which hosts an infrastructure project management software housed on UN servers-- SOURCE-- to highlight investible projects that its member countries are preparing. This collaboration seeks to enhance the capacities of countries to mount high-quality projects including PPPs suitable for private investment that can be presented at the Fair.

II. ROADMAP FOR PARTICIPATION



The graphic below depicts a country's typical journey in the Fair participation process. It highlights the key steps involved during four distinct phases: (i) General Preparation (i.e., pre-organization around three months in advance of the Fair; (ii) Project Evaluation (i.e., diagnostics and informal coaching to qualify specific projects prior to the Fair); (iii) Active Presentation in the Fair, including of specific opportunities or case studies; and (iv) Follow-up after participating in the Fair.

THE SDG FAIR "JOURNEY"



For each of these four phases, specific activities are carried out in accordance with predefined steps, as elaborated below.

PHASE 1: General Preparation

This is the most important phase in the journey. With careful planning, these initial preparatory steps can lead to successful participation. As a first step, countries should formally express their interest in presenting at the upcoming Fair (**Step 1**). Typically, the President of ECOSOC issues a formal letter announcing the dates of the next Fair and inviting countries to submit expressions of interest. Upon confirmation by DESA, a focal point of contact (FP) from the country must be identified to arrange preliminary meetings and liaise with the Fair Secretariat. The FP can include,

for example, representatives from the UN Resident Coordinators Office or the country's Permanent Mission to the UN. In this meeting the roadmap of participation will be presented and timeline for each milestone emphasized. Following the initial meeting, the FP will convene relevant stakeholders, such as ministries, project sponsors, and investment promotion agencies, to identify projects that substantively contribute to the achievement of the SDGs and have commercial viability (**Step 2**). For more information on the criteria, please refer to the *SDG Fair Introductory Presentation* in the 'Additional Resources' section.

Once potential suitable projects are identified, the FP and the team assigned will compile relevant studies and share with the Fair Secretariat a Project Proposal, with an outline of essential components such as the nature of the project(s), anticipated financing structure and expected rates of return, the most pivotal SDG impacts, and specific funding or initial development capital needs (**Step 3**).

PHASE 2: Diagnostics and Evaluation

The next step entails further reviewing and prioritizing projects to qualify readiness for sharing with investors. The FP will coordinate with the project team to use the Self-Assessment Tool for Appraising the Investment Readiness of Sustainable Infrastructure (STAIRS) to help determine the project proposal's strengths and areas needing improvement (**Step 4**). The readiness indicated by the assessment will determine whether a country can proceed with preparations to participate in the Fair. A more detailed explanation of the STAIRS Tool is provided in the Annex.

Projects deemed to still be in their early stage of development will not be presented at the Fair. Instead, the FP and the team working on the project will receive more intensive and targeted coaching from the Fair team and experts, to increase their potential of success with presenting projects at the Fair. Further resources will also be suggested that can help teams in refining key areas of investability.

For those projects that pass a threshold in the diagnostic (i.e. evaluated to be at a high level of preparedness), further refinement in the lead-up to the Fair will be undertaken. The FP will then integrate insights from the assessment into the project proposal. Following this, a draft presentation is to be shared with the Fair Secretariat (**Step 5**). The Secretariat may also recommend resources and advice to the FP on how to bolster their project's readiness.

Once the project proposal and the draft presentation are deemed ready, both parties will work collaboratively to refine pitches and the presentation well in advance (**Step 6**).

PHASE 3: Presentation

Immediately before the event, marketing and communication activities should be undertaken by the UN and the project champions to promote the country's participation (**Step 7**). The FP will support compiling a target list of investors, other actors in the ecosystem, and press contacts. UN-DESA reserves the right to distribute and publicize any materials (including videos and presentation slides) presented during the Fair.

On the day of the Fair, in a setting dedicated to the presenting country, one or more suitable representatives, such as senior government officials from the relevant ministry and technical experts, will deliver a 15–20-minute presentation to an audience of potential investors (**Step 8**). It is recommended that each country's presentation have a maximum of 3 speakers to keep the session engaging. The presentation may be virtual or in-person with hybrid options for dialing in. The Fair programme may also include high-level side events and capacity building workshops centered on the specific theme of the Fair as well as on the countries presenting projects, information about the investment landscape of their country, or case studies of their past successful projects (**Step 9**).

PHASE 4: Post Fair Follow-up

After the Fair, there tends to be interest from investors and other attendees in connecting with project sponsors and learning more about the investment opportunity.

DESA can provide countries with a list of private sector actors that registered to attend the event. As per our privacy policy, DESA cannot disclose individual contact details but if there is a particular interest in connecting with a specific organization, DESA may facilitate an introduction. The contact details of panelists and experts that contributed to the country presentation participants who raised a query can be shared upon request. If there are any unanswered questions from investors or other experts during the presentation or if any questions come up after the presentation, an adequate and complete response can be provided within 3 – 5 working days.

If a request comes to DESA, the Fair Secretariat can connect the two interested parties and support the initial meeting between them. Thereafter, a focal point of contact should be identified to coordinate with the investors, explore opportunities for collaboration, and follow through with requests for additional information (**Step 10**).

Additionally, the FP (or an alternative designated monitoring FP) will be requested to share updates on the project's development both informally and through a more formal annual survey. DESA will also seek updated data on the project's funding, successful completion, and SDG-related outcomes to facilitate contact and pairing with appropriate investors (**Step 11**).

In addition to sharing feedback with the Secretariat, a country can also express interest in returning to the Fair in the future including through the co-hosting of a targeted investor outreach event with DESA (**Step 12**).

III. WHAT TO INCLUDE IN THE PRESENTATION

The presentation should have the following elements:

- Executive Summary
- Overview of the Country:
 - Including Macroeconomic Highlights, Country background, and Project Relevance
- Business Climate:
 - Information about the relevant market, rationale and targets
 - Relevant investment incentive regimes
- Overview of Projects:
 - Business Model Description
 - Business Case
 - Timeline for Investment
 - Financing structure
 - Partners
- Investment Details:
 - Expected rate of return, Key financial projections, breakdown of the budget and total investment funding required
- Timeline:
 - Status of Preliminary Feasibility Studies
 - Current Stage
 - Expected time for project completion
- SDG Alignment:
 - Impact on the SDGs including data on KPIs
- Summary of concrete requests for investors including monetary value, financing model and timeline for the investments being sought

A detailed template that countries are encouraged to use can be accessed [here](#).

IV. SAMPLE PRESENTATIONS



Colombia: Solar Project and Indigenous Community Development plan

Colombia presented the Terra Initiative, a project showcasing a partnership between a private corporation and an indigenous community to construct a 162MWp grid-connected photovoltaic plant and 3 sustainable villages. The investment need amounted to US\$135.4 million, and the projected rate of return was above 15%. The project identified six directly impacted SDG areas including a forecasted decrease in carbon dioxide emissions of 3.8 million tons over 35 years from cleaner energy provision to around 1000 indigenous community members.

Full presentation can be accessed [here](#).

**Namibia: *Southern Corridor Development Initiative***

Namibia's Southern Corridor Development Initiative (SCDI) is framed in the Green Hydrogen and Derivatives Strategy, which aims to develop an at-scale green fuels industry through harnessing its indigenous natural resources and capitalizing on shared regional infrastructure in Southern Africa. The strategy seeks to reach green hydrogen production volumes of 10 to 15 million tons per annum by 2050, produced in three hydrogen valleys. The SCDI is a portfolio in the Southern Region of Namibia, that maximizes the opportunity presented by Green Hydrogen and Ammonia for the country's sustainable development. At the Fair, flagship projects were presented that amount to \$4.32 billion, for which the country will issue several green, blue, and social bonds, consistent with their recently developed integrated national financing framework. Apart from Green Hydrogen, the authorities will update the port, and roadways which will provide access to neighboring landlocked countries.

Full presentation can be accessed [here](#).

**Suriname: *Green Wood Processing Finance Fund***

Through a two-pronged project proposal, Suriname presented its plans to boost domestic wood processing, develop eco-tourism opportunities, increase exports, and create an industry park for sustainable operations. The capital expenditure for the combined project was about US\$70 million and Suriname projected internal rates of return of between 7% and 138% across the several business cases under its first project proposal.

Full presentation can be accessed [here](#).

**Ethiopia: *SDG-aligned Investment project***

Ethiopian Investment Holdings, a strategic investment arm of the Government Ethiopia created to aggregate sovereign funds, state-owned enterprises, and assets, presented its framework for SDG Investment. Three projects within its larger pipeline were also spotlighted, in the agriculture and manufacturing/sustainable production sectors. The three projects offered investment opportunities that ranged in ticket size from US\$7 million to over US\$31 million. They demonstrated an alignment not only to five SDGs but also to several national and regional climate change policy goals.

Full presentation can be accessed [here](#).

V. FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Q: What are the criteria for presenting projects?

A: The Fair seeks to showcase only those projects that can contribute both substantively and positively to the achievement of one or more SDGs. Therefore, eligible projects must have a clear narrative and hypothesis of expected impact and evidence that no material social or environmental harm will be created from the realization of the project. Projects must be able to justify commercial viability with a high level of investment readiness (as evidenced by compliance to readiness checklists provided by DESA and the results of provided diagnostic tools).

Q: Is there a minimum project ticket size that can be presented?

A: Experience has shown limited appetite from investors in smaller-sized projects. Ideally, individual project ticket sizes should be around USD 30 million or more. Participating countries, particularly LDC, LLDCs, and SIDS, are encouraged to present portfolio instruments or programmatic approaches capable of aggregating needs and risks for smaller project investments. While not excluded in all cases, individual projects with small ticket sizes are highly discouraged.

Q: Who attends the Fair?

A: The Fair is a public event promoted to a broad audience. Typically, representatives from both large and small private investors, intermediaries, multilateral development banks, public development banks, UN system and civil society are present. Many countries presenting projects seek to increase visibility vis-a-vis private institutional investors, fund managers, or other alternative asset investors. For others, the main target is development finance institutions or more boutique impact funders.

An indicative [list](#) of past participating institutions is provided below:

Alecta	Johannesburg Stock	SEB Investment
Allianz Group	Exchange	Swedfund
APG	J.P. Morgan	Standard Chartered
Bank of America	Infralinks Capital Partners	State Street Global Advisors
Bancolombia	International Finance	S & P Global
BlackRock	Corporation	UBS
CalPERS	International Fund for	UN Capital Development
Citi	Agricultural Development	Fund
Development Bank of	(IFAD)	UN Development
Southern Africa	Mastercard	Programme
DWS	M&G Investments	UN Joint SDG Fund
ENEL	Nuveen	Visa
GIIN	PIMCO	Wells Fargo
	Rand Merchant Bank	World Bank

Q: What is the role of the UN Country Team (CT) and/or Resident Coordinator's Office (RCO)?

A: RCOs and designated UNCT agency leads can facilitate the effective participation of country delegates in the Fair by supporting the coordination and preparation of teams at all stages. An RCO staff or other designate from the UN Country Team (e.g., sector or relevant UN Joint Programme lead) can serve as a primary focal point, convening relevant local stakeholders and providing an interface between designated government officials and DESA throughout the process. In some cases, they may also be designated as the primary contact person. They also play a role in identifying project sponsors ready to present, assisting officials with the SDG impact analysis of projects, and coordinating the preparation, delivery, and follow-up of presentations at the Fair. UNCTs and RCOs may, at their discretion and as they support countries in crafting sustainable development projects, also nominate potential project proposals suitable for presentation at the Fair.

Q: How will DESA support the countries?

A: The Secretariat located in DESA provides support to countries to participate effectively in the Fair which includes: (i) providing resources and tools to help qualify and screen bankable investment opportunities; (ii) assessing the readiness of project sponsors to pitch to investors; (iii) providing technical inputs and independent review of SDG impact analysis and other aspects of viability; and (iv) widely promoting country participation particularly among investors and development finance institutions.

Q: Who can deliver the presentation at the Fair?

A: Presentations can be delivered by senior-level government officials, state-owned company representatives, private investors with government endorsement, or local financial intermediaries including national development banks. A maximum of three speakers per country is recommended.

Most commonly, projects are presented by national investment agencies or boards, ministries of finance/economy, investment, or infrastructure, or other senior diplomatic officials or trade officers based in the USA.

VI. ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- SDG Investment Fair [website](#)
- SDG Investment Fair: [Introductory Presentation](#)
- Self-Assessment Tool for Appraising the Investment Readiness of Sustainable Infrastructure (STAIRS) Tool: [Introductory Presentation](#)
- The 4th International [Conference](#) on Financing for Development
- 2024 UN Financing for Sustainable Development [Report](#)
- SDG Global [Database](#): Indicators on all SDGs and by country
- UNDP [SDG Investor Platform](#)
- Force For Good [Report](#) 2024
- Global Impact Investors Network: Sizing the Impact Investment Market 2024 [Report](#)
- Global [Database](#) of Development Finance Institutions and Public Development Banks

- Convergence: [Primer](#) on blended finance projects
- UNDP SDG [Impact Standards](#) for Bonds, Private Equity, and Enterprises
- Duke University: Impact Measurement and Management for the SDGs [Course](#)
- UNDOCO and Dag Hammarskjöld Foundation. [Unlocking SDG Financing: Findings from Early Adopters.](#)
- SOURCE – [The Multilateral Platform for Sustainable Infrastructure](#)

VII. ANNEX

Self-Assessment Tool for Appraising the Investment Readiness of Sustainable Infrastructure (STAIRS)

In response to demand from government planning and investment officials to support their efforts in developing a bankable pipeline of sustainable infrastructure projects, in 2022 the Fair incubated a new online diagnostic tool. The tool helps countries to screen and prioritize potential projects. In providing clear checklists and key parameters investors require to be met, the tool can enhance the preparation of sustainable investment opportunities, including those aiming to be showcased at the Fair.

The Tool is focused on sustainable infra projects, as this is the largest category of projects brought to the Fair to date and a focus for many initial countries taking part in the Fair. The scope of application thus primarily targets private-public partnership (PPP) projects that are beyond the initial concept stage but not yet tendered. However, over time, this initial focus could be expanded and tailored to other classes of projects as well as to support readiness to comply with specific sustainability-linked instruments as well as ‘premium’ standards.

The tool is designed as a questionnaire, crafted around a methodological framework and scoring approach. The scoring around project investment readiness is structured around three pillars: (1) Project readiness, (2) SDG alignment and contributions, and (3) Management Quality and Investment track record. Based on individual and composite scores, which are guided by prompting questions, end-users are provided with a report that presents a more objective perspective on the investment readiness status of their projects, including identifying the most pivotal areas requiring further developmental efforts.

The report also directs champions to useful resources to help improve the quality of their presentations. Priority areas for further development are flagged, coupled with suggested additional technical guidance resources. Based on an initial categorization of project by sector, sub-sector, and investment location, the tool will also support an identification of possible sources of technical assistance and project preparation facilities that would be most appropriate. Notes and explanatory text will enable the ratings to be transparent.

Collaboration with the SOURCE platform and Finance in Common Secretariat is envisioned to bring the tool to a wider audience and to support its roll-out. A prototype version of the tool is currently being transformed into a fully developed web-based application. This includes coding an updated methodology and integrating elements from a database of public development banks that can supply TA resources.