Global foreign direct investment (FDI) flows showed a strong rebound in 2021, reaching $1.58 trillion, up 64 per cent from 2020.

Net official development assistance (ODA) flows were $177.6 billion (current price) in 2021, an increase of 3.3 per cent in real terms compared to 2020, reaching a new peak and representing 0.33 per cent of DAC donors’ combined gross national income.

In 2021, remittance flows to low and middle-income grew 8.6 per cent from 2020 and reached $605 billion.

Total external debt stocks of low- and middle-income countries rose 5.3 per cent in 2020 to $8.7 trillion, driven by an increase in long-term debt. The pace of external debt accumulation outstripped exports growth; the debt service to export ratio increased in low-income countries from 3.1 per cent in 2011 to 8.8 percent in 2020.

The latest data show that uptake of the Internet accelerated during the pandemic. The number of users surged by 782 million to reach 4.9 billion people in 2021, or 63 per cent of the population, up from 4.1 billion people in 2019. Globally, in 2020, 62 per cent of men were using the Internet, compared with 57 per cent of women.

Fixed broadband subscriptions continue to grow steadily, attaining a level of 17 subscriptions per 100 inhabitants on a global average in 2021. In the least developed countries, despite double-digit growth, fixed broadband remains a privilege of the few, with only 1.4 subscriptions per 100 inhabitants.

Tariff rates have remained unchanged amid the pandemic. The worldwide weighted tariff average remains stable at around 2 per cent. The latest figures from 2020 indicate that agriculture and clothing products continue to face the highest tariff rates at about 6 per cent, followed by textiles at 4 per cent and industrial products at 1.4 per cent.


Early analysis indicates that ODA for data and statistics amounted to $650 million in 2020, a slight decline from $662 million in 2019. The overall trend of funding for data and statistics has also remained stagnant in recent years, with only 0.3 per cent of total ODA dedicated to this area.

Sub-Saharan Africa is the region with the lowest birth and death registration completion rate, followed by Eastern and South-Eastern Asia and Oceania. For 2016-2020, 148 countries have birth registration data that are at least 90 per cent complete and 154 countries have death registration data that are at least 75 per cent complete.

The world is facing a multitude of crises across the social, health, environmental, peace and security spectrum that requires an urgent scaling up of international cooperation to find lasting solutions.

Many developing countries are facing rising inflation, major supply chain disruptions, policy uncertainties and unsustainable debt. They are left with competing priorities for limited fiscal space and finding it harder than ever to recover economically.

To stay ahead of crises, significantly more investment in data and statistics will be necessary.
On 28 May 2020, Canada and Jamaica and the UN Secretary-General launched the Initiative on Financing for Development in the Era of COVID-19 and Beyond (FfDI) to identify and promote concrete financing solutions to the COVID-19 health and development emergency. An elaborated menu of options was considered by Finance Ministers and discussed at the special meeting of Heads of State and Government on the margins of the 75th United Nations General Assembly. Six clusters have then been set up to advance these policy options: sustainability and climate action (led by UNDP); socio-economic response: social protection, gender, youth, health, education, and human rights (led by ILO); finance and technology (led by UNCTAD); liquidity and debt vulnerability (led by DESA); illicit financial flows (led by Regional Economic Commissions); and addressing special country needs (led by DESA).

**UN System in Action**

- **The Global Investors for Sustainable Development (GISD)**, an Alliance convened by Secretary-General of 30 global business leaders from the financial and non-financial sectors with US$16 trillion assets under management, developed a unified definition of Sustainable Development Investing (SDI) and released the first of its kind Call to Action for COVID-19 bonds, which was endorsed by the International Capital Markets Association.

- **The Global Recovery Observatory**, a collaboration among Government and local development and human rights actors. The Observatory database is updated weekly.

- **The OHCHR Surge Initiative** has supported 38 projects aimed at building disaggregated datasets to provide foundational evidence for COVID-19 emergency and long-term socio-economic plans. To establish human rights-oriented strategies, the projects have facilitated the cross-fertilization of approaches among UN entities, governments and local development and human rights actors.

- **The Partner2Connect Digital Coalition** is a multi-stakeholder alliance launched by ITU in close cooperation with the Office of the Secretary-General’s Envoy on Technology, and in line with the UN Secretary General’s Roadmap for Digital Cooperation, to foster meaningful connectivity and digital transformation in the hardest-to-connect communities, with a focus on, but not limited to, Least Developed Countries (LDCs), Landlocked Developing Countries (LLDCs) and Small Island Developing States (SIDS).