UNITED NATIONS SYSTEM STAFF COLLEGE

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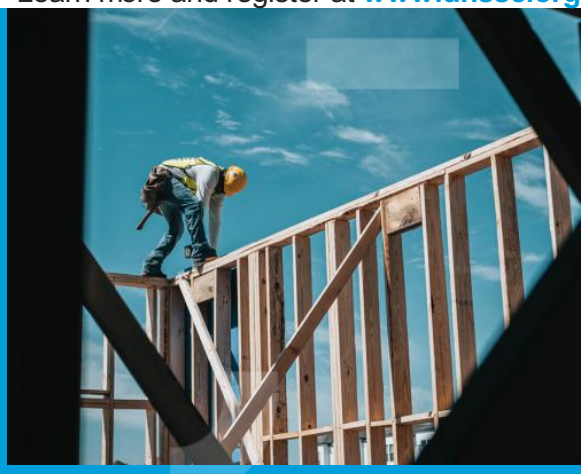
ONLINE

30 MAR 2026 - 01 MAY 2026

Transforming Economies for Sustainable Development

Climate and EnvironmentData and Evaluation

Sustainable development and the SDGs



LANGUAGE	DURATION	ENROLL BY	PRICE	LOCATION	TARGET
English	5 weeks	20 Feb 2026	Free	ONLINE	Everyone

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This engaging and thought-provoking 5-week facilitated online course will investigate current economic development paradigms and examine why they necessitate a transformative shift in our understanding of what is needed for sustainable development. This course will provide a conceptual overview of what this transformation entails and some of the key imperatives to achieve socially just, environmentally sustainable, and thriving economies.

Introduction

The scale and nature of challenges we face in achieving sustainable development for all necessitate a transformative shift in how we approach the notion of development. Economic transformation is an important component in this multi-dimensional transformation.

The limitations of a narrative that focuses on development mainly as an outcome of protracted growth in economic output, have been revealed far too frequently across time and contexts. Despite substantive gains in global economic output, uneven patterns of socioeconomic progress, increasing inequalities, irreversible environmental damage, inherent economic fragility and a perpetual risk of backsliding at the slightest shock, highlight the need to transform our economies.

This transformation requires us to consider economic development as a goal that needs to be pursued in tandem with, and not privileged over, social well-being and preserving the environment. This course will unpack the concept of economic transformation, why it is necessary, and key policy areas that can help develop environmentally sustainable, socially just, and thriving economies.

Objectives

Upon successful completion of the course, participants will be able to:

1. Evaluate whether the current economic paradigm promotes sustainable development and be aware of alternative economic approaches.
2. Contextualize the challenges and opportunities of disruptive megatrends, and how they could be addressed through economic policy.
3. Understand the centrality of public governance and state capacity for effective economic transformation.
4. Link broader narratives to local and regional realities.

Course methodology

UNSSC online courses are designed to deliver maximum learning outcomes through carefully chosen high-quality learning materials. Our facilitated online courses combine self-paced study modules with applied learning components, such as case studies, interactive exercises, and collaborative group work, specially tailored to the needs of the professional interested in deepening their knowledge on a particular subject matter.

Participants will benefit from live moderated webinars which feature valuable inputs from renowned subject matter experts and allow real-time dialogue with high-level speakers. Webinar recordings are made available to ensure that participants have a flexible and seamless learning experience.

An expert facilitator guides and assists participants throughout the course and provides real-time feedback on activities and exercises. Our user-friendly social online learning platform provides participants with the opportunity to connect with peers from diverse organizational backgrounds, fostering peer-to-peer learning.

UNSSC online courses give learners the opportunity to complete activities when it best fits their schedule. Participants are largely free to determine their own weekly study plan. Lasting five weeks and demanding six hours of study per week, UNSSC online courses incorporate the same high academic rigour as any UNSSC face-to-face programme.

Course contents

Week 1: Unpacking Economic Transformation: examines global economic trends to argue the need to change course. It then explores alternative economic paradigms that emphasize the need for economic transformation to create environmentally sustainable, socially just and thriving economies to ensure sustainable development for all.

Week 2: Developing environmentally sustainable economies: establishes the need for, and explores ways to enable, a transformative shift towards a low carbon-intensive and resource-efficient production and consumption in such a way that promotes economic activity and creates employment opportunities.

Week 3: Developing Just Economies: explores the social paradoxes in our current economic systems, and how these trends need to be reversed and harnessed in line with principles of justice, equity, and societal well-being.

Week 4: Developing Thriving Economies: focuses on how to develop economies that are not only environmentally sustainable, just and equitable, but also sustainably prosperous through strategic investments and appropriate capacity building. It argues for the importance of domestic resource mobilization, state capacity and structural transformations.

Week 5: Effective Governance for Economic Transformation: discusses the importance of effective state policy and strong public institutions in effecting economic transformation. It explores examples from developing contexts that could guide similar initiatives in other countries.

Target audience

Target Audience

The course seeks participants engaged in policy development, advisory, research and programming roles. These can include:

1. Policy Influencers at National Planning Ministries, National Bodies, Ministries of Economy, Finance and related domains
2. UN Staff engaged in Economic Policy Advisory and Programming roles
3. Researchers from academia and think-tanks
4. University/College Faculty in domains related to Public/Economic policy from developing countries.

Cost of participation

This online course is offered **free-of-charge**.

UNSSC adopts a concrete methodology in its selection process that considers the scope, objectives, and expected outcomes of the course as well as specific selection criteria for its course participants to increase course impact. The criteria include quality of motivation, professional experience and knowledge, organizational commitment, diversity, the potential for future work, and willingness to contribute to the course.

Interested individuals are encouraged to sign up for the course and provide a clear and well-crafted motivation statement in the online application form, with a short explanation of the benefit they can derive from the course as well as their possible contribution to enriching the course.

Participants will enjoy the following benefits from the free online course:

- 3-months access to course materials (including exclusive video material and key readings, recording of webinars and speakers' presentations.
- Participation in live webinars with renowned subject matter experts.
- Exclusive access to the UNSSC online social learning environment with training and supporting background materials, and the opportunity to stay connected with colleagues.

Certificates from the United Nations System Staff College will be awarded to participants upon completion of the course.

UNSSC fosters collaborative peer-to-peer learning among its course participants. To achieve this, UNSSC adopts a rigorous methodology in its selection process that considers the course's scope, objectives, and expected outcomes. UNSSC utilizes specific selection criteria for its course participants to promote cohort-based learning and increase course impact. Interested individuals are encouraged to sign up for the moderated online course and be **ready to complete an additional comprehensive selection survey after the course registration closes**.

Selection criteria:

The selection criteria includes quality of motivation, professional experience and knowledge, commitment, diversity (gender, geographic region, sector, etc.), and willingness to contribute to the course.

Selection process:

1. Register for the course by clicking on the sign-up button. Please provide a clear motivation statement and a short explanation of the benefit you can derive from the course as well as your possible contribution to enriching it.
2. After the deadline for registration, you will receive a link to a survey to confirm the necessary conditions for course completion (technical requirements and time availability), as well as to answer course-specific questions.