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Global politics
Higher level and standard level
Paper 1

18 May 2026

Zone A afternoon | **Zone B** afternoon | **Zone C** afternoon

1 hour 15 minutes

Instructions to students

- Do not open this examination paper until instructed to do so.
- Answer all the questions.
- The maximum mark for this examination paper is **[25 marks]**.

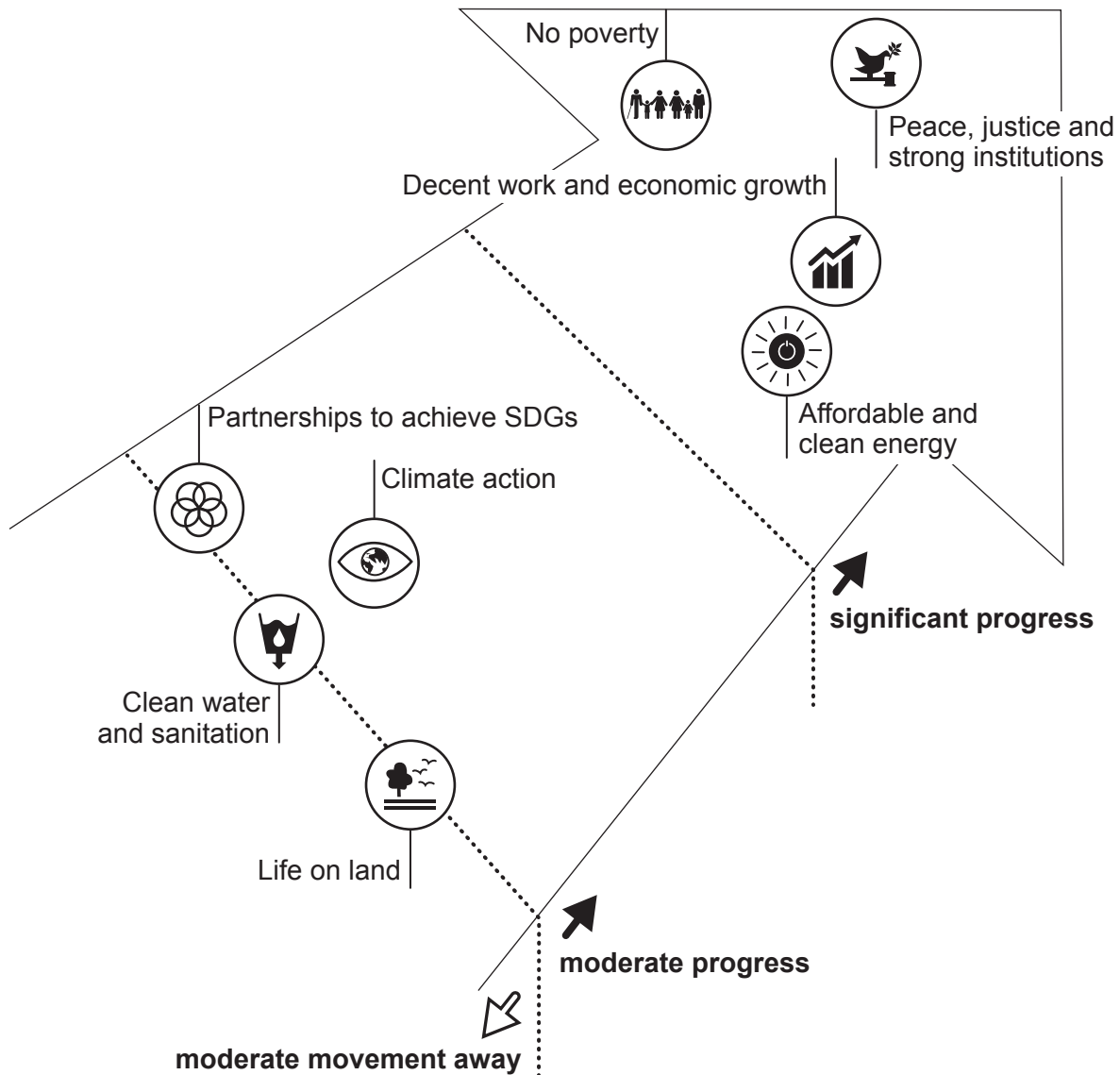
Interdependence in global politics: Achievements and limitations of the UN

Read all the sources carefully and answer all the questions that follow.

Source A

Diagram outlining the progress toward the United Nations (UN) Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) across the European Union (EU). Adapted from “EU progress towards the SDGs” by Eurostat (2022).

UN progress toward the SDGs across the EU from 2015 to 2021



Source B

Adapted from “Inequality in development: The 2030 Agenda, SDG 10 and the role of redistribution”, a paper written by Holger Apel and published in the *Real-world economics review* (2020).

The SDGs and Agenda 2030¹ were passed by the United Nations (UN) General Assembly in 2015. This caused the issue of inequality to be raised as a priority in an international development agenda for the first time. The inclusion of SDG 10—which aims to reduce inequality within and between countries—was not based on a broad agreement among the member states but required lobbying from the UN and non-governmental organizations (NGOs). This lack of state support limited how much the UN was able to achieve. Furthermore, SDG 10 is missing precise language and a clear plan to achieve its goal.

References to inequality can be found in at least 13 of the 17 SDGs. Therefore, inequality can be considered one of the central themes of Agenda 2030, but one that is also preventing the implementation of this ambitious agenda. The UN is not able to achieve this bold agenda on its own and requires the assistance of national governments. Furthermore, the UN is also crucial in ensuring that businesses support the implementation of Agenda 2030, as businesses have no motive to help achieve these goals on their own. The influence of the UN means that more meaningful changes, such as addressing the unequal effects of the climate crises, can be accomplished.

¹ Agenda 2030: a UN document introducing the SDGs, meant to achieve a more sustainable, environmentally friendly and equitable future

Source C

Adapted from “Is the UN failing?”, a blog post written by Martin Duffy for the *Scottish Centre for Global History* (2021).

The main success of the United Nations (UN) has been improvements in democracy and peacekeeping, such as by preventing new world wars. The UN's scope of responsibilities is steadily growing, and its most notable contributions are in universal access to education and global health promotion. The UN Security Council is the only body that can authorize and regulate the legal use of force and cooperation among member states, and it is essential to the functioning of the UN. This makes it the key actor in ensuring international peace.

The UN remains the main intergovernmental organization (IGO) trying to solve problems that are most threatening to the world. The UN has expanded the Climate Promise, which helps low-income countries produce more sustainable energy, to more than 120 states. Climate change protection is further encouraged by initiatives such as the SDGs. The SDGs approach climate change as an issue connected to many other challenges, including poverty, gender inequality, unequal access to education, unemployment and many other modern issues society faces. As a result, the UN remains a global leader in achieving peace and sustainable development.

Source D

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1. Outline what Source A says about the achievements of the United Nations (UN). [3]
 2. With explicit reference to Source B **and one** example you have studied, explain the impact of intergovernmental organizations (IGOs) on inequality. [4]
 3. Compare and contrast the views of Source C **and** Source D on the effectiveness of the UN. [6]
 4. With reference to **at least three** sources **and** your own knowledge, evaluate the limitations of the UN. [12]
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References:

- Source A** Eurostat. <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/products-eurostat-news/-/wdn-20220523-1>. Licensed under CC BY 4.0 licence <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>. Source adapted.
- Source B** Apel, H., 2020. Inequality in development: the 2030 Agenda, SDG 10 and the role of redistribution. *Real-world economics review*, [PDF online] Available at: <http://www.paecon.net/PAEReview/issue92/Apel92.pdf> [Accessed 1 April 2025]. Source adapted.