

# Iceland's SDG Progress (VNR 2023)



SDG 1	<b>NO POVERTY</b> <b>End poverty in all its forms everywhere</b>
<b>1. Comprehensive Welfare System</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Iceland has established a social protection system that ensures no one lives in extreme poverty, providing everyone with minimum financial security and equal access to basic services such as housing, transportation, healthcare, and education.</li> </ul>
<b>2. Reduction in Economic Hardship</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Recent statistics show a decrease in the percentage of the population living with a significant lack of economic resources, lack of material quality, and those at risk of poverty, highlighting successful measures in reducing economic hardships.</li> </ul>
<b>3. International Development Cooperation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Iceland's Policy for International Development Cooperation aims to fight poverty and hunger globally, with a focus on supporting the least developed countries and ensuring a significant portion of its Gross National Income (GNI) goes to these countries.</li> </ul>

<b>Challenges</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Support for Marginalized Groups:</b> There's a need for further support for people living with a lack of economic resources to prevent poverty, especially among families, and to ensure equal opportunities in education and social mobility.</li> <li><b>Economic Hardships due to COVID-19 and External Factors:</b> Economic impact from the COVID-19 pandemic and the war in Ukraine are expected to increase poverty and economic hardships for marginalized groups.</li> <li><b>High Housing Costs and Limited Availability:</b> The cost and availability of housing remain significant challenges, contributing to poverty, especially among immigrants, people with disabilities, and low-income groups.</li> <li><b>Limited Social Mobility:</b> Certain groups face severe restrictions in their social mobility due to economic barriers, housing challenges, and systemic issues, limiting their ability to improve their situations.</li> </ul>
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SDG 2	<b>ZERO HUNGER</b> <b>End hunger, achieve food security, improve nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture</b>
<b>1. Food Strategy and Action Plan (2020)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Iceland's first comprehensive food strategy aims to increase value creation in food production, ensure food safety, and enhance people's well-being in harmony with the environment.</li> </ul>
<b>2. International Development Cooperation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Iceland participates in global efforts to reduce poverty and hunger, supporting organizations like the World Food Programme</li> </ul>

	(WFP) and UNICEF, focusing on nutritional assistance and sustainable development projects.
<b>3. Implementation of Food Aid Reviews</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A comprehensive review of food aid provision by domestic organizations has led to improvements in public services, ensuring resources meet the needs of those in need, including low-wage workers and people of foreign origin.</li> </ul>

<b>Challenges</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Nutritional Challenges: Despite the absence of significant malnutrition, obesity remains a challenge, necessitating measures for health, well-being, and quality of life improvement.</li> <li>• Ensuring Food Security for Vulnerable Groups: Continuous efforts are needed to prevent hunger and malnutrition among the poor, elderly, and disabled.</li> </ul>
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<b>SDG 3</b>	<b>GOOD HEALTH AND WELL-BEING</b> <b>Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages</b>
<b>1. High Life Expectancy</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Icelanders have one of the highest life expectancies in Europe, with a significant portion reporting good physical and mental health.</li> </ul>
<b>2. Patient Payment Cap</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A cap on patient payments for services outside hospitals has been implemented to lower healthcare costs for regular users.</li> </ul>
<b>3. Maternal and Neonatal Health</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Iceland boasts low maternal and neonatal mortality rates, with services provided by trained professionals and funded by the government.</li> </ul>

<b>Challenges</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Healthcare Staffing: Ensuring sufficient staffing remains a challenge, affecting disease treatment and emergency response.</li> <li>• Geographical Distribution of Services: Ensuring safe and cost-effective healthcare across all regions is an ongoing issue.</li> </ul>
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<b>SDG 4</b>	<b>QUALITY EDUCATION</b> <b>Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all</b>
<b>1. Universal Right to Education</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Legislation in Iceland guarantees free primary and lower secondary education for all children, emphasizing the importance of education for democracy, human rights, equality, culture, and sustainability.</li> </ul>
<b>2. Legislation Focusing on Children</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A new law prioritizes children in the social system, aiming for integrated services to support all children, including those with disabilities. This is part of efforts to strengthen the preschool system and is encapsulated in the new Prosperity Act.</li> </ul>

<b>3. International Cooperation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Iceland prioritizes education in its bilateral development cooperation, supporting educational projects in regions like Malawi and Uganda, and focusing on educating girls in Afghanistan through UNESCO.</li> </ul>
<b>4. Whole School Projects</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Initiatives like the Green Flag Project/Eco Schools and UNICEF's Child Rights School promote holistic education focusing on human rights, gender equality, and sustainability.</li> </ul>

<b>Challenges</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Equal Opportunities for Immigrants: Guaranteeing equal education opportunities for students of foreign origin and reducing secondary education dropout rates remain significant challenges, with language barriers being a key factor.</li> <li>• Gender Equality in Education: Addressing the lag in academic performance and university graduation rates among boys compared to girls is a crucial challenge.</li> <li>• Literacy and Reading Skills: Despite high literacy rates, reading skills have declined, especially among certain subgroups, according to PISA research.</li> <li>• Education for Sustainable Development: There's a need for more targeted and cross-cutting sustainable development education across all levels, particularly at the university level.</li> </ul>
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<b>SDG 5</b>	<b>GENDER EQUALITY</b> <b>Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girl</b>
<b>1. Global Leader in Gender Equality</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Iceland leads the global ranking for gender equality, with a significant portion of its gender pay gap closed, showcasing its commitment to gender equality.</li> </ul>
<b>2. Legislative Advances</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Implementation of equal pay certification and amendments to the marriage law to eliminate exceptions for marrying under 18 demonstrate Iceland's proactive legal stance on gender equality.</li> </ul>
<b>3. International Commitments</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Active participation in UN Women's initiatives and contributions to international projects focused on gender equality, such as the UNFPA-UNICEF Joint Programme for the elimination of FGM, underline Iceland's commitment to global gender equality efforts.</li> </ul>

<b>Challenges</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Valuation of Women's Work: There is an ongoing issue with the undervaluation of professions dominated by women, contributing to persistent wage gaps.</li> <li>• Management Representation: Women are underrepresented in management and board positions, indicating a need for increased female representation in leadership roles.</li> <li>• Unpaid Labor and Gendered Division of Labor: The COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated the visibility of the gendered division of</li> </ul>
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	<p>labor in homes, with women taking on a larger share of unpaid labor.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Violence Against Women and Children: Despite legal frameworks, violence, especially sexual violence against women and children, remains a pressing issue, with marginalized groups being at higher risk.</li> </ul>
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<b>SDG 6</b>	<b>CLEAN WATER AND SANITATION</b> <b>Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all</b>
<b>1. Implementation of a Comprehensive Water Plan</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A new national strategy initiated in 2022 focuses on the protection and management of water resources across municipal boundaries, addressing water quality and sustainability.</li> </ul>
<b>2. Special Protection for Wetlands</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Under the Nature Conservation Act, wetlands receive special attention for their ecological importance, with a ten-year policy and action plan for land and forest restoration, including the restoration of drained wetlands.</li> </ul>
<b>3. First Policy on Water Conservation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• This policy, accompanied by a monitoring and action plan, aims to promote sustainable water use and supply systems.</li> </ul>
<b>4. Water Resource Management</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The introduction of a coordinated water plan marks a significant step towards comprehensive water resource management, reflecting a strategic shift in addressing water issues.</li> </ul>

<b>Challenges</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sewage Treatment: The need for significant improvements in sewage systems is critical, as only 3% of sewage receives secondary treatment, highlighting a major gap in meeting SDG 6.3 on wastewater treatment.</li> <li>• Wetland Conservation: Despite the legal and policy framework to protect wetlands, ongoing draining activities and insufficient conservation measures pose challenges to achieving sustainable water management and biodiversity goals.</li> </ul>
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<b>SDG 7</b>	<b>AFFORDABLE AND CLEAN ENERGY</b> <b>Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all</b>
<b>1. Renewable Energy Dominance</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Approximately 85% of Iceland's total primary energy supply comes from domestically produced renewable sources. This includes all electricity production (73% hydropower, 26% geothermal, and 0.1% wind energy).</li> </ul>
<b>2. Geothermal District Heating</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The development of geothermal district heating systems has resulted in significant economic, environmental, and social benefits. About 99% of domestic heating comes from renewable sources.</li> </ul>

<b>3. Education and Knowledge Sharing</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Through programs like the GRÓ Geothermal Training Programme under UNESCO, Iceland enhances global capacity in geothermal exploration and development.</li> </ul>
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<b>Challenges</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Complete Energy Transition: Iceland aims to become entirely independent of fossil fuels by 2050, with specific targets for renewable energy in transport to reach at least 40% by 2030 and complete the energy transition in transport by 2040.</li> <li>• Energy Security: Ensuring secure energy provision throughout Iceland, especially in times of natural crises, is a challenge. Improvements to energy delivery systems are ongoing.</li> <li>• Sustainable Energy Demand: Meeting the increasing demand for green energy without disturbing untouched areas of nature is a priority, alongside reducing unnecessary energy consumption.</li> </ul>
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<b>SDG 8</b>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>DECENT WORK AND ECONOMIC GROWTH</b>  <b>Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all</b></p>
<b>1. Innovation and Productivity</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Iceland has focused on ingenuity-driven innovation, promoting a technologically advanced and diverse business ecosystem to increase productivity, especially in electronic communications, IT, and specialized scientific and technical activities.</li> </ul>
<b>2. Equal Pay Certification</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• By law, Icelandic workplaces are required to obtain equal pay certification, ensuring efforts towards wage equality.</li> </ul>
<b>3. Sustainable Tourism</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The government promotes sustainable tourism that emphasizes culture and local products, aiming to create valuable jobs.</li> </ul>

<b>Challenges</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• EETs Among Young People of Foreign Origin: A significant proportion of young people of foreign origin are neither in education nor employed, posing a concern for their integration and economic participation.</li> <li>• Gender-Based Wage Gap: Despite efforts, a gender-based wage gap persists, with women generally earning less than men for similar work.</li> <li>• Sustainable Economic Opportunities: Ensuring a diversity of economic opportunities that harmonize with nature and society remains a challenge.</li> <li>• Immigrant and Refugee Labour Rights: The increasing number of non-nationals in the labour market necessitates focused policy support for their labour rights, health, and safety.</li> </ul>
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<b>SDG 9</b>	<b>INDUSTRY, INNOVATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE</b> <b>Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialisation and foster innovation</b>
<b>1. Infrastructure and Connectivity</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Iceland aims to enhance public transport and connectivity, including the laying of marine cables for telecommunication and expanding high-speed internet access across the country.</li> </ul>
<b>2. Industry and Innovation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The industry sector contributes significantly to Iceland's GDP, with a focus on sustainability and carbon neutrality by 2040. Governmental funds support innovation companies and startups, especially those with a sustainability focus.</li> </ul>
<b>3. Sustainable Energy Policy</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>With goals to become carbon neutral by 2040 and fossil fuel-free by 2050, Iceland emphasizes transitioning to renewable energy sources in all sectors, including transport.</li> </ul>

<b>Challenges</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Infrastructure for All:</b> Ensuring safe and reliable infrastructure for all inhabitants and improving public transport accessibility remain ongoing challenges.</li> <li><b>Sustainable Tourism:</b> Balancing infrastructure investment with sustainability and nature conservation in the face of growing tourism.</li> <li><b>Energy Transition in Transport:</b> Completing the transition from fossil fuels in land, air, and sea transport is a major task, requiring new technological solutions and public-private partnerships.</li> </ul>
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<b>SDG 10</b>	<b>REDUCED INEQUALITIES</b> <b>Reduce inequality within and among countries</b>
<b>1. Legislative Changes</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Iceland has made significant legislative amendments to prohibit discrimination based on origin within the labor market and society. This includes gender-based budgeting, equal pay certification, and the incorporation of numerous European regulations related to financial markets into Icelandic law.</li> </ul>
<b>2. Equal Opportunities</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Efforts to ensure equal opportunities for all Icelandic citizens, regardless of gender, race, or ethnic origin, have been prioritized, with specific measures to support vulnerable groups during the COVID-19 pandemic.</li> </ul>
<b>3. Refugee Support</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The establishment of a coordinated reception center for refugees in 2022 marks a significant step towards better service and efficiency in handling refugee matters.</li> </ul>

<b>Challenges</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Immigrant and Refugee Integration: The rapid increase in the number of immigrants and refugees presents ongoing challenges in ensuring equal opportunities, wages, and quality services, including decent housing.</li> <li>• Public Transport and Infrastructure: Improving access to reliable public transport and addressing the accumulated need for investment in infrastructure remain critical to ensuring equitable development.</li> </ul>
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<b>SDG 11</b>	<b>SUSTAINABLE CITIES AND COMMUNITIES</b> <b>Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable</b>
<b>1. Development of Transport Infrastructure</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The agreement on ambitious transport infrastructure development in the capital area aims at increasing safety, reducing pollution, and promoting public transport.</li> </ul>
<b>2. Protection of Natural Areas</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A significant portion of Iceland's territory, including Vatnajökull National Park, is under protection, contributing to conservation efforts.</li> </ul>

<b>Challenges</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Housing Shortages: Rapidly growing housing costs, especially in the capital area, have resulted in burdensome costs for tenants.</li> <li>• High Car Ownership: The popularity of personal car use necessitates real alternatives to encourage more active modes of transport.</li> </ul>
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<b>SDG 12</b>	<b>RESPONSIBLE CONSUMPTION AND PRODUCTION</b> <b>Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns</b>
<b>1. Waste Reduction and Sustainable Consumption</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A national policy titled "Together against Waste" aims to foster sustainable consumption, reduce packaging use, promote product designs free of harmful substances, and encourage green entrepreneurship.</li> </ul>
<b>2. Circular Economy and Waste Management</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The "Towards a Circular Economy" policy seeks to significantly reduce waste generation, increase recycling, and halt landfilling practices.</li> </ul>
<b>3. Food Waste Reduction</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Iceland aims to cut food waste by 30% by 2025 and 50% by 2030 throughout the food value chain.</li> </ul>
<b>4. Sustainable Public Procurement</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Public procurement processes assess carbon footprints, aligning with sustainable procurement strategies.</li> </ul>

<b>Challenges</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>High Consumption and Waste Generation:</b> Despite being one of Europe's wealthiest nations, Iceland struggles with high levels of consumption and waste, with only a small portion of household waste being recycled.</li> <li>• <b>Infrastructure for Recycling:</b> The lack of domestic recycling infrastructure necessitates the export of most waste and a significant portion of construction waste ending up in landfills.</li> </ul>
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<b>SDG 13</b>	<b>CLIMATE ACTION</b> <b>Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts</b>
<b>1. Enhanced Nationally Determined Contributions (NDC)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Iceland aims for a net reduction in greenhouse gas emissions of 55% by 2030 compared to 1990 levels, aligning its efforts with the European Union, its member states, and Norway.</li> </ul>
<b>2. Carbon Neutrality and Energy Transition</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Legal commitment to achieve carbon neutrality by 2040 and complete independence from fossil fuels, focusing on reducing the energy need and transitioning the transport and fishing fleet to renewable energy.</li> </ul>
<b>3. Climate Action Measures</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Implementation of 50 measures in the Climate Action Plan aimed at reducing emissions and increasing carbon sequestration has been initiated.</li> </ul>
<b>4. Support for Developing Countries</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Financial contributions to the Green Climate Fund and participation in international initiatives like the UN Adaptation Fund and the UNDP's Climate Promise to support global climate action.</li> </ul>

<b>Challenges</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>High Per Capita Emissions:</b> Despite ambitious goals, Iceland's per capita net greenhouse gas emissions remain high, necessitating concerted efforts across all sectors to reduce consumption-based emissions.</li> <li>• <b>Land Use and Forestry Emissions:</b> Emissions from land use, land use change, and forestry (LULUCF) are significant, making it a priority area for emission reductions and carbon sequestration efforts.</li> </ul>
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<b>SDG 14</b>	<b>LIFE BELOW WATER</b> <b>Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development</b>
<b>1. Sustainable Fisheries Management</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Iceland employs a fisheries management system to ensure responsible and sustainable fishing, with decisions on catch limits based on scientific advice.</li> </ul>



<b>2. Research and Protection of Marine Ecosystems</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Efforts to map the seabed and research on ocean acidification are being strengthened to protect marine life and ecosystems.</li> </ul>
<b>3. Renewable Energy Use</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All electricity production and most heating in Iceland come from renewable sources, highlighting a move towards sustainability.</li> </ul>

<b>Challenges</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Ocean Acidification and Plastic Pollution:</b> These are significant concerns for Iceland, with ocean acidification posing a risk to marine life and fisheries and plastic pollution affecting marine ecosystems.</li> <li>• <b>Sustainable Use of Marine Resources:</b> While Iceland has made strides in sustainable fisheries, challenges remain in fully implementing and monitoring policies to protect marine biodiversity.</li> </ul>
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<b>SDG 15</b>	<b>LIFE ON LAND</b> <b>Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss</b>
<b>1. Increased Protection of Land and Ecosystems</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Over a quarter of Iceland's land area is under some form of protection, with efforts to increase afforestation, land restoration, and wetland reclamation.</li> </ul>
<b>2. Sustainable Use and Reclamation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• New legislation on land restoration and forests promotes sustainable use and aims to reclaim ecosystems affected by erosion and degradation.</li> </ul>

<b>Challenges</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Climate Change and Invasive Species:</b> The spread of invasive species and the impact of climate change pose significant threats to Iceland's ecosystems.</li> <li>• <b>Erosion and Land Degradation:</b> Continued efforts are needed to combat erosion, vegetation degradation, and desertification affecting large areas of the country.</li> </ul>
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<b>SDG 16</b>	<b>PEACE, JUSTICE AND STRONG INSTITUTIONS</b> <b>Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels</b>
<b>1. High Global Peace Ranking</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Iceland has a consistent ranking as the most peaceful country since 2009.</li> </ul>
<b>2. Legislative Reforms</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Iceland has an adaptation of legislation in line with international conventions like the Council of Europe's Istanbul Convention.</li> </ul>

<b>3. Advocacy for Human Rights and Democracy</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Iceland's foreign policy emphasizes human rights, democracy, and the rule of law, including efforts within OSCE, the Council of Europe, and the UN.</li> </ul>
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<b>Challenges</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cybercrime and Organised Crime: Increased prevalence of cybercrime necessitates vigilant law enforcement and training.</li> <li>• Gender-Based Violence: Special attention to vulnerable groups to combat all forms of violence.</li> </ul>
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<b>SDG 17</b>	<b>PARTNERSHIPS FOR THE GOALS</b> <b>Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalise the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development</b>
<b>1. ODA Contributions</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Iceland supports the UN target of providing 0.7% of GNI to Official Development Assistance (ODA), contributing 0.35% of GNI in 2022.</li> </ul>
<b>2. Trade Relations</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Iceland has supported WTO's Doha Round objectives, offering most goods from Least Developed Countries (LDCs) free access to its market without customs duties or quotas.</li> </ul>
<b>3. Sustainable Iceland Platform</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It was established in 2022 to foster multi-stakeholder engagement and coherent policymaking on sustainable development.</li> </ul>

<b>Challenges</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Meeting ODA Targets: Iceland acknowledges the challenge of not meeting the UN's 0.7% GNI target for development cooperation, planning to gradually increase its ODA contributions.</li> <li>• Sustainable Development Policy: There's an ongoing need for a national policy on sustainable development, with Sustainable Iceland beginning the drafting process.</li> </ul>
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