

UNITED NATIONS



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## **Brand & SDGs - Towards Milano Cortina 2026 Olympic Winter Games**

*Final ceremony – 1 July 2024*

On behalf of UNRIC Brussels and in my capacity as the Desk Officer for Italy, I am glad and honoured to contribute these few lines to the wrap-up celebration of the Laboratory activity "Brand & SDGs - Towards Milano Cortina 2026 Olympic Winter Games" . I thank Ms. Cocco for her commitment, praise the work of all those involved, and congratulate the participants and the winners. In this regard, I am happy to inform you that UNRIC/Italy has agreed to hosting the four finalist works on our online spaces and platforms, with a view to enhancing their visibility and amplifying the outreach of their messages.

The emphasis you place on the SDGs in your works echoes the Secretary General Antonio Guterres's words that it is the time to rescue the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) which are woefully off-track halfway towards their 2030 deadline, The SDGs aren't just a list of goals. They carry the hopes, dreams, rights and expectations of people everywhere. When the world leaders adopted the SDGs in 2015, they promised they would leave no one behind on such crucial issues as extreme poverty and hunger, access to clean water and sanitation, green energy, quality universal education and lifelong learning opportunities. Yet,, despite commitments, 1.2 billion people were still living in poverty as of 2022, and roughly eight per cent of the global population, or 680 million people, will still be facing hunger by the end of the decade. The international community cannot accept these numbers.

With your initiative, you committed to highlighting this plight, contributing to creatively raising awareness, in line with Mr. Guterres's request that everyone should act to give the Goals a fair chance of success. The obstacles ahead are harrowing: hunger, "a shocking stain on humanity and a human rights violation"; the slow transition to renewable energy; the benefits and opportunities of digitalization that are not being spread widely enough; too many children and young people worldwide victims of poor quality education, or no education at all; the need to bring to an end the war on nature and "the triple planetary crisis" of climate change, pollution and biodiversity loss; the need to ensure full gender equality and end discrimination.

Within this bleak backdrop, your initiative helps nurture the conviction that every single, creative effort is worth as a significant input in the struggle to keep the SDGs' values and message alive.

Thank you

Fabio Graziosi – UNRIC/Italy