

# UN High Level Political Forum 2020

## Business and Industry Major Group (B&I MG)

### **Advancing Inclusive Multilateralism with Business for Pandemic Response, Recovery and Rebuilding during the UN Decade of Action and Delivery**

It is in the DNA of business to turn challenges into opportunities and to innovate and develop practical and realistic solutions. Businesses of all sizes, sectors and nationalities have joined forces with governments and the multilateral community to respond forcefully to the pandemic crisis while maintaining momentum towards the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Business is stepping up to the challenges related to COVID-19 response and recovery across healthcare, food security, social, economic and environmental dimensions.

We note with appreciation that member states have stated the need for business to actively engage, and both the UN Global Sustainable Development Report (GSDR), the SG's March report on Economic and Social Impacts of the COVID-19 crisis and the recent SG Policy Brief: The World of Work and COVID-19 have highlighted the crucial role of business. Now is the time to mobilize all of society's actions for sustainable, just and resilient recovery and growth, leaving no-one behind.

We call on Member States representatives and UN entities to focus on synergies at national and global level of COVID19 response and recovery with the SDGs, and to seize the opportunity to mainstream private sector partnership and expertise in that regard into the UN Decade of Action and Delivery.

Going forward, the HLPF should prioritize the essential enablers for action across the SDGs. For business, those fundamental enablers have to do with inclusive and sustainable economic growth and full and productive employment, which can allow for:

- Advancing human well-being
- Building human capacity,
- Providing decent work,
- Eradicating poverty,
- Accessing essential basic services, such as health, education, water, energy, and sanitation.

The Business and industry Major Group believes the focus of ECOSOC, HLPF and the Financing for Development process should be on catalyzing global resource flows of technology and funding towards economic empowerment and growth, longer-term

sustainability pathways and the co-creation of integrated solutions through cooperation and partnerships at all levels. Particular attention should be dedicated to re-establishing livelihoods, strengthening healthcare preparedness and access; boosting infrastructure services like access to clean water, electricity, and connectivity, building economic and social resilience.

The Decade of Delivery and Action should approach recovery from the triple shock of the COVID-19 crisis to healthcare, jobs, food security and economic activity on the foundation of good governance and rule of law as set out in SDG16. Truly inclusive collaborative structures at national and global level to share expertise, engage in dialogue and launch partnerships with business will be critical to this, whether in developing and updating VNRs, developing NDCs for the Paris Agreement, or developing sustainable development investment roadmaps.

In this regard, business has supported the reform of the United Nations Development System (UNDS) with a view to improving its coherence, efficiency and impact. The reform is now being tested by COVID-19 and it more than ever demands collaboration between employer and business organizations, local UN Global Compact networks and UN Resident Coordinators (RCs). We are encouraged by RCs who have reached out to and worked with local business communities and employers' federations to problem-solve and raise capacity together, and we are keen to further build these relationships with RCs, particularly to reach and engage with SMEs and MSMEs and implement business friendly policy frameworks and partnerships.

We wish to thank Member States and the UN DESA secretariat who have consistently supported the involvement of a wide range of stakeholders, including business, even in these difficult conditions.

Like many, we had high expectations for this year's HLPF: we envisioned outcomes that would strengthen HLPF's future work plan and reflect openness to innovation in organizing both its meetings and inter-sessional work to usher in a UN Decade of Action that would deliver on SDGs and rise to new challenges. We regret that the technical limitations of meeting virtually have seriously limited quality time for discussion and constrained access and the working environment for governments and engaged observers.

For the Business and Industry Major Group, the lost opportunities of this HLPF due to the circumstances of the pandemic and lockdown mean the international community must now redouble its efforts to think outside the box and to entertain innovative ideas for:

- inter-sessional partnership and cooperation at the national and regional levels,
- new options for gathering useful information to track shared value and impact and
- new ways of conducting meetings that truly enhance substantive engagement of both government representatives and stakeholders, including business

**The Business and Industry Major Group is ready to join forces with governments and the UN as we continue to respond forcefully to the pandemic while advancing the SDGs.** We urge HLPF to crowd in experts and “do-ers” from the private sector, and to mobilize countries and other stakeholders to rebuild better and stronger throughout their COVID-19 recovery working within the framework of the 2030 Agenda.

The closing session of this HLPF raises a question about the nature of multilateralism after COVID 19. In our view, there is an even more immediate point concerning the nature of multilateralism during the pandemic. We need not – indeed, must not -- wait until the pandemic is past history to support and reinforce multilateralism and pursue “inclusive multilateralism” which:

- promotes peace and cooperation;
- relies on effective and transparent multilateral bodies;
- advances collaborative approaches among states;
- encourages international dialogue and cooperation to design and implement effective policies
- engages business and other stakeholders in substantive dialogue and partnerships.

Such an approach will not only provide benefits to COVID 19 response and a just recovery, but will also be the cornerstone of the UN Decade of Action and Delivery allowing the international community itself to Build Back Better, for a resilient and strong UN that is recognized as ready for future challenges.