

Inputs of the Commission for Social Development to the 2021 HLPF and ECOSOC on the theme “Sustainable and resilient recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic that promotes the economic, social and environmental dimensions of sustainable development: building an inclusive and effective path for the achievement of the 2030 Agenda in the context of the decade of action and delivery for sustainable development.”

These draft inputs are based on the outcome of the 59th session of the Commission, in response to the letter of the President of ECOSOC that also suggested a template for inputs.

Overview

The 59th session of the Commission for Social Development took place from 8-17 February 2021, with the priority theme of “Socially Just Transition Towards Sustainable Development: The Role of Digital Technologies on social development and well-being of all”.

The Commission also reviewed relevant United Nations plans and programmes of action pertaining to the situation of social groups, the social dimensions of the New Partnership for Africa’s Development. The Commission held a high-level panel discussion on the priority theme, a Ministerial Forum under the theme of “Promoting multilateralism to realize inclusive, resilient and sustainable recovery from COVID-19 in the context of the decade of action and delivery for sustainable development and its social dimensions”, a high-level panel discussion on Emerging Issues: “social policy to promote a more inclusive, resilient and sustainable recovery: building back better post-COVID-19 for the achievement of the 2030 Agenda in the context of the decade of action and delivery for sustainable development”, a multi-stakeholder forum on the priority theme to share solutions, and an interactive dialogue with senior officials of the United Nations system on the priority theme. 25 Ministers and Vice Ministers participated in the general discussion of the Commission.

The Commission adopted four draft resolutions on: future organization and methods of work of the Commission; social dimensions of the New Partnership for Africa’s Development; socially just transition towards sustainable development: the role of digital technologies on social development and well-being of all; and policies and programmes involving youth. The first three are recommended for adoption by the Economic and Social Council. The Commission decided that the priority theme for its 60th session would be “Inclusive and resilient recovery from COVID-19 for sustainable livelihoods, well-being and dignity for all: eradicating poverty and hunger in all its forms and dimensions to achieve the 2030 Agenda”.

“Impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on the implementation of the SDGs under review in the 2021 HLPF from the vantage point of your intergovernmental body, bearing in mind the interlinkages with other SDGs”

[The SDGs listed in brackets are for clarity of reference. Can be deleted when submit to ECOSOC]

- The COVID-19 pandemic is impacting the well-being of people in all spheres of their life, especially in health, livelihoods, food security, and education. It has exacerbated poverty, hunger, and economic and social inequalities within and among countries, reversing hard-won development gains and hampering progress towards achieving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and all its Goals and targets.

- The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development provides the blueprint for recover better from the pandemic and build more inclusive, equitable, resilient, and sustainable societies where no one is left behind, by making sustainable long-term investments to eradicate poverty in all its forms and address inequality in all its dimensions. There is an urgent need to accelerate action on all levels and by all stakeholders to fulfil the vision and Goals of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. At the start of the Decade of Action to deliver the SDGs, the visions, principles and commitments made at the World Summit for Social Development remain as relevant as ever.
- Member States reaffirmed their commitment to implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development for all by ensuring that no one would be left behind and reaching the furthest behind first, and by recognizing human rights and that the dignity of the human person is fundamental.

Health, poverty, hunger and inequality

- The WHO reports 116,363,935 confirmed cases of COVID-19, including 2,587,225 deaths worldwide, as of 8 March 2021. [SDG 3]
- Extreme poverty is expected to increase in all countries, particularly in LLDCs and SIDS that rely heavily on tourism, remittances and external capital flows. Global extreme poverty is projected to increase in 2020 for the first time since 1998, with an additional 88 million to 115 million people worldwide falling into poverty. [SDG1]
- The number of food insecure people could almost double (from 135 million in 2019 to 265 million) by the end of 2020, mainly in low and middle-income countries, mainly due to the inability of vulnerable families to purchase food because job and income losses. [SDG2]
- Although economic growth is projected to bounce back in 2021, the benefits of such growth are more likely to go to higher income groups than the rest of the population. [SDG1 & 10]
- The most marginalized and disadvantaged are being most affected by COVID-19. Closures of micro- and small-enterprises, layoffs and rising unemployment of women, young and lower-skilled workers, and severe human capacity losses among disadvantaged households due to school closures and lack of access to ICTs may further accelerate the widening of within country inequalities. Workplace closures, reductions in working hours and a decline in labour and non-labour sources of income have severely undermined the economic security and livelihoods of people, especially when those losses are not compensated for by other forms of income, such as social transfers. This will further dampen aggregated demand, reduce productivity and lower social mobility, thus making it more difficult to achieve inclusive growth, which is necessary to reduce poverty and inequality. Poor countries are also less equipped to respond to the negative impacts of COVID-19 pandemic. [SDG 8 and 10]
- The International Labour Organization Centenary Declaration for the Future of Work is of particular relevance in addressing these challenges and ensuring a socially just transition towards sustainable development. [SDG 8]

Digital divide

- COVID-19 has accelerated the pace of digital transformation, yet for all their promises and potential, digital technologies are not benefiting everyone equally. The digital divide is exacerbating the risk of increased inequalities and exclusion of those who are not digitally connected. Digital divides exist both between and within countries, with intersected rural-urban digital divide, gender digital divide, and digital divide between youth and older persons. [SDG10]

“Actions, policy guidance, progress, challenges and areas requiring urgent attention in relation to the SDGs and to the theme within the area under the purview of your intergovernmental body.”

Structural fragilities hampering social development and realization of 2030 Agenda needs urgent attention

- Despite achievements in the implementation of the Copenhagen Declaration and the Programme of Action, more than 25 years after the World Summit for Social Development, progress has been slow and uneven, and major gaps remain. The current trajectory of economic development has led not to shared prosperity for all, but to high and rising inequalities within and among countries, aggravated by the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as environmental degradation, adverse effects of climate change, extreme weather events, including natural disasters, drought, desertification, biodiversity loss, food shortages, water scarcity, wildfires, sea level rise and depletion of the oceans, and unsustainable consumption and production patterns. Least developed and developing countries face particular challenges. [SDG 12, 13]

Measures taken to address impacts of COVID-19

- Over 170 countries have taken swift emergency response measures to counter the crisis' negative impact. Fiscal stimulus packages have typically included additional spending and forgone revenue (including temporary tax cuts), the extension of social protection benefits to those who were previously not covered, the provision of support or interest-free loans to small businesses and the provision of liquidity support to protect jobs.
- Social protection measures, although often temporary, included: the expansion of unemployment benefits, special allowances and grants, income and job protection, and health protection. Additional measures to support the most vulnerable included: cash transfers programmes, food assistance programmes, social insurance and child benefits to support families.
- Measures taken to prevent job losses included: the provision of wage subsidies, the expansion or introduction of partial unemployment benefits to compensate for crisis-induced reductions in working hours, the provision of employment services to complement income support for unemployed workers, and the relaxation of job-seeking preconditions associated with unemployment insurance payments.
- Other measures to guarantee income security to workers included: short-time work schemes, extended publicly financed sickness benefits to workers, and expanding statutory sick pay and sickness benefits. Some countries have addressed the particular vulnerability of older persons and persons with disabilities by introducing old-age, survivor and disability benefits, through advancing the payment, or increasing the level, of pensions.

“An assessment of the situation regarding the principle of ‘ensuring that no one is left behind’ at the global, regional and national levels against of background of the COVID-19 pandemic in achieving the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs, within the respective area addressed by your intergovernmental bodies”

- COVID-19 and related restrictions have hit persons in vulnerable situations the hardest. The COVID-19 pandemic is predicted to create a new category of poor people who will live in middle-income countries, in urban areas and are younger, better educated and less likely to work in agriculture. Many have insufficient financial assets to keep their family above the poverty line when faced with a sudden loss of income.
- Low-skilled, low-wage workers are among some of the hardest hit, in particular in food and accommodation; retail and wholesale; business services and administration and manufacturing sectors. Workers in informal jobs face higher health and safety risks due to the nature of their work and the lack of social protection, rights at work, and the economic security, and they are more vulnerable to income loss.

- Women are disproportionately represented among the new poor because nearly 60 per cent of them work in the informal economy and thus have a greater risk of falling into poverty. Female workers are also highly concentrated in the sectors hardest hit.
- Migrant workers and refugees often work in sectors with high levels of temporary, informal or unprotected work. Some have been forced to return to their countries of origin because of heightened discrimination and xenophobia, job losses and a lack of access to support measures. Limits on the movement of seasonal and migrant workers have led to labour shortages and lost income. A sharp decline of the remittances of migrant workers (by 20 per cent in 2020) has had a rippling effect on their families and communities.
- COVID-19 has also further exacerbated the challenges faced by indigenous peoples, who already experience marginalization and extreme poverty. Growing numbers of indigenous peoples are falling into extreme poverty. Indigenous communities face a grave health threat due to poor access to health care, significantly higher rates of communicable and non-communicable diseases and lack of access to essential services, sanitation and other key preventive measures.
- The pandemic is not only threatening the lives of older persons, but also risks significantly lowering their incomes and living standards. Older persons may rely on multiple income sources, including paid work, savings and financial support from families and pensions, all of which may be jeopardized as a result of the COVID-19 crisis. Older women are particularly vulnerable as they represent nearly 65 per cent of the world population above retirement age who do not have a regular pension.
- The COVID-19 has significant impacts on youth employment, education and training and further exacerbates existing inequalities in learning opportunities and access to labour market. Since the onset of the pandemic, one out of every six young people worldwide has stopped working, while those still employed have experienced a 42 per cent drop in income. Moreover, many young people are not adequately included in social protection systems because of requirements in terms of contributions, formal employment, or age.
- Persons with disabilities are less likely to be employed and, if employed, are more likely to work in the informal sector without social protection. COVID-19 measures affect them directly because of the loss of jobs and incomes, but also indirectly through the loss of income sustained by family members of the same household, further increasing the vulnerability of persons with disabilities.
- Almost all children have been directly affected by school closures, which have put their education at risk. Unequal access to remote learning options has meant that some have fared better than others. In some countries, school closures risk causing spikes in child labour and neglect. **Girls** are at increased risk of school dropout, sexual abuse, early pregnancy, and early and forced marriage. In addition, malnutrition is a threat to the approximately 370 million most disadvantaged children who missed out on school meals in the first half of 2020.

“Various measures and policy recommendations on building an inclusive and effective path for the achievement of the 2030 Agenda in the context of the decade of action and delivery for sustainable development”

Universal access to basic social services and social protection

- Promote affordable and equitable access to basic services, in particular quality formal and non-formal education, at all levels, as well as programmes that promote equality and inclusion and health-care services, including through the acceleration of the transition towards equitable access to universal health coverage, access to affordable housing, nutrition and food, and access to employment and decent work, information and communications technology and infrastructure, through advancing gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls.

- Strengthen nationally appropriate social protection systems for all to address multiple, often interrelated and complex causes of poverty and inequality by easing the burden of certain expenditure during periods of unemployment, contributing to health-related goals, gender equality and decent work, and facilitating the full inclusion of persons with disabilities.
- Promote universal access to social services and providing nationally appropriate social protection floors to reduce inequality and poverty, addressing social exclusion and promoting inclusive economic growth.
- Provide universal age-, disability-, gender-responsive and family-oriented social protection systems, including, as appropriate, targeted cash transfers for people and families in vulnerable situations, such as when headed by a single parent, in particular those headed by women.

Decent work

- Expand work opportunities and productivity in both rural and urban sectors by achieving and recovering economic growth, investing in human resource development, promoting technologies that generate productive employment, and encouraging self-employment, entrepreneurship and small and medium-sized enterprises.
- Adopt labour market policies that strengthen institutions and provide adequate labour protection to all workers, including through social dialogue, especially the most disadvantaged, including through minimum wage policies, while taking into account the role of workers' and employers' organizations, as applicable, as part of policies to boost income growth for the vast majority of workers, taking into consideration the specific circumstances of each country.
- Address challenges faced by those working in informal or vulnerable jobs, by investing in the creation of more decent work opportunities, including providing access to decent jobs in the formal sector.
- Reduce to less than 3 per cent the transaction costs of migrant remittances and eliminate corridors with costs higher than 5 per cent, including through the use of digital technologies.

Gender equality

- Implement policies that ensure women's economic empowerment by supporting the full and productive participation of women in the labour market, including women with disabilities and those living in poverty and female heads of household, and to promote equal pay for equal work or work of equal value, the equal sharing of responsibilities between parents, access to childcare facilities, and work-family balance.
- Support the digital entrepreneurship of women, including in e-commerce, including for micro-, small and medium-sized enterprises, to develop local solutions and relevant content and promote innovation and decent job creation.
- Work towards closing the gender digital divide and promoting equal access to information and communications technologies and to the Internet for women and girls, enhance their digital skills and competences, and explore appropriate ways to address any potential negative impact of new technologies on gender equality.

Closing digital divides and promoting digital inclusion

- Close the digital divides and promote digital inclusion, by taking into account national and regional contexts and addressing the challenges associated with access, affordability, digital literacy and digital skills, and awareness and by ensuring that the benefits of new technologies are available to all, taking into account the needs of those who are vulnerable or in vulnerable situations.
- Promote digital inclusion, by implementing inclusive policies and measures that aim to tackle the challenges associated with equal access, in particular, the lack of affordability, including by, where appropriate, considering providing targeted subsidies, proportionate taxation or the provision of a

basic digital basket, as well as engage in multi-stakeholder cooperation, national and regional broadband strategies, and facilitate public-private partnerships in order to significantly increase access to information and communications technology, address specific barriers to inclusion by promoting the availability and supply of information and communications technology, and strive to provide universal and affordable access to the Internet, and also notes the potential of relevant regional and international initiatives to achieve this goal.

- Address the lack of efficient, affordable and accessible digital technology infrastructure, especially in rural and remote areas, and engaging the private sector as a relevant partner to enhance infrastructure finance and network deployment.
- Seek to achieve universal connectivity to ensure that every person has affordable access to quality broadband Internet by 2030, including by catalyzing essential partnerships, as well to apply an age-, disability-, gender-responsive and family-oriented approach to all interventions on digital technologies.
- Develop, as appropriate, a holistic approach and targeted strategies and policies to address specific barriers to digital inclusion and close the digital divides. These should consider national and regional contexts and address the challenges associated with access, affordability, digital literacy and digital skills, and awareness.
- Increase access of all women and girls to digital technologies to foster their education and training to enhance their digital skills and competences, as well as the productivity and mobility of women in the labour market;
- Enhance efficiency, accountability and transparency of social protection systems, public services and sustainable infrastructure through enhanced use of information and communications technologies for the benefit of all women and girls, including for those hardest to reach and who face multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination.
- Strengthen investment in lifelong education, digital literacy, including building digital skills of young people as a way to boosting their future employability and social inclusion.
- Harness scientific research and expertise and realize the potential of technology to realize the 2030 Agenda.
- Address the major impediments that developing countries face in engaging with and accessing new technologies, such as an appropriate enabling environment, sufficient resources, infrastructure, education, capacity, investment and connectivity, as well as issues related to technology ownership, setting standards and technology flows.
- The United Nations system should continue to support Member States in their pursuit of socially just transitions towards sustainable development and facilitate international cooperation in the field of digital technologies for developing countries, upon their request, with the aim of achieving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

ANNEX

1) Mexico

Mexico considers it is necessary to align the priority theme of the Commission with that of the High Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development. Had the Commission done so, it would have had substantive and intergovernmentally agreed outcome to share with the President of ECOSOC for consideration by the HLPF. The consequence of the premature and inertial decision by the Commission means that, as Commission is asked to present its inputs on the HLPF priority theme, there is no more time for Member States to have thorough discussions or prepare a resolution related to that priority theme. While the priority theme for the 59th Session of the Commission is very relevant, it was not aligned to that of the HLPF as it should be, in accordance with resolution 72/305 of the General Assembly.

The Commission will likely face the same situation next year, considering that the priority theme for its 60th Session has already been decided, before the priority theme of the 2022 HLPF is known. Mexico continues to be of the view that the Commission should align its priority theme to that of the HLPF so that the outcomes of its discussions can be shared to the President of ECOSOC and encourages members of the Commission to consider revisiting the matter of the priority theme once the 2022 HLPF modalities are agreed in order to ensure alignment.

2) Russian Federation

In paragraph 4 Russia presented the following changes in the wording:

The Commission also reviewed the outcome documents of the World Summit for Social Development and the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly, relevant United Nations plans and programmes of action pertaining to the situation of social groups, such as Outcome document of the high-level meeting of the General Assembly on the realization of the Millennium Development Goals and other internationally agreed development goals for persons with disabilities: the way forward, a disability-inclusive development agenda towards 2015 and beyond; World Programme of Action for Youth, Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing, 2002, family issues, policies and programmes, as well as the social dimensions of the New Partnership for Africa's Development. The Commission held a high-level panel discussion on the priority theme, a Ministerial Forum under the theme of "Promoting multilateralism to realize inclusive, resilient and sustainable recovery from COVID-19 in the context of the decade of action and delivery for sustainable development and its social dimensions", a high-level panel discussion on Emerging Issues: "social policy to promote a more inclusive, resilient and sustainable recovery: building back better post-COVID-19 for the achievement of the 2030 Agenda in the context of the decade of action and delivery for sustainable development", a multi-stakeholder forum on the priority theme to share solutions, and an interactive dialogue with senior officials of the United Nations system on the priority theme. 25 Ministers and Vice Ministers participated in the general discussion of the Commission.

In paragraph 6 Russia presented the following changes in the wording:

The COVID-19 pandemic is impacting the well-being of people in all spheres of their life, especially in health, livelihoods, food security, and education. It has exacerbated poverty, hunger, and economic and social inequalities within and among countries, reversing hard-won development gains and hampering progress towards achieving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and all its Goals and targets, recognizing that the COVID-19 pandemic requires a global response based on unity, solidarity and renewed multilateral cooperation.

In paragraph 7 Russia presented the following changes in the wording:

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development provides the blueprint for recover better from the pandemic and build more inclusive, equitable, resilient, and sustainable societies where no one is left behind, by making sustainable long-term investments to eradicate poverty in all its forms and address inequality in all its dimensions. There is an urgent need to accelerate action on all levels and by all stakeholders to fulfill the vision and Goals of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. At the start of the Decade of Action to deliver the SDGs, the visions, principles and commitments made at the World Summit for Social Development remain as relevant as ever and are central to addressing emerging global challenges, and social policies have a key role to play in addressing the immediate effects of socioeconomic crises and in the design of recovery strategies.

In paragraph 13 Russia presented the following changes in the first line:

~~The most marginalized and disadvantaged~~ The poorest and the most vulnerable are being most affected by COVID-19.

In paragraph 14 Russia presented the following changes:

The International Labour Organization Centenary Declaration for the Future of Work is ~~of particular~~ of particular relevance in addressing these challenges and ensuring a socially just transition towards sustainable development. [SDG 8]

In paragraph 15 Russia presented the following changes:

COVID-19 has accelerated the pace of digital transformation, yet for all their promises and potential, digital technologies are not benefiting everyone equally. The digital divide is exacerbating the risk of increased inequalities and exclusion of those who ~~are not digitally connected~~ have no access to ICTs. Digital divides exist both between and within countries, with ~~intersected~~ rural-urban digital divide, gender digital divide, and digital divide between youth and older persons. [SDG10]

In paragraph 20 Russia presented the following changes:

Other measures to guarantee income security to workers included: short-time work schemes, extended publicly financed sickness benefits to workers, and expanding statutory sick pay and sickness benefits. Some countries have addressed the particular vulnerability of older persons and persons with disabilities ~~by introducing old age, survivor and disability benefits,~~ through advancing the payment, or increasing the level, of pensions.

In paragraphs 21 and 22 Russia presented these changes:

~~COVID-19 and related restrictions have hit persons in vulnerable situations the hardest. The COVID-19 pandemic is predicted to create a new category of poor people who will live in middle-income countries, in urban areas and are younger, better educated and less likely to work in agriculture.~~ Many have insufficient financial assets to keep their family above the poverty line when faced with a sudden loss of income.

Low-skilled, low-wage workers are among some of the hardest hit, in particular in food and accommodation; retail and wholesale; business services and administration and manufacturing sectors. Workers in informal jobs face higher ~~health and safety~~ risks due to the nature of their work and the lack of social protection, ~~rights at work, and the economic security,~~ and they are more vulnerable to income loss.

In paragraphs 24 and 25 Russia presented these changes:

Migrant workers and refugees often work in sectors with high levels of temporary, informal ~~or unprotected~~ work. Some have been forced to return to their countries of origin because of heightened discrimination and xenophobia, job losses and a lack of access to support measures. Limits on the movement of seasonal and migrant workers have led to labour shortages and lost income. A sharp decline of the remittances of migrant workers (by 20 per cent in 2020) has had a rippling effect on their families and communities.

COVID-19 has also further exacerbated the challenges faced by indigenous peoples, ~~who already experience marginalization and extreme poverty.~~ Growing numbers of indigenous peoples are falling into extreme poverty. Indigenous communities face a grave health threat due to poor access to health care, significantly higher rates of communicable and non-communicable diseases and lack of access to essential services, sanitation and other key preventive measures.

In paragraph 27 Russia presented this change:

The COVID-19 has significant impacts on youth employment, education and training and further exacerbates existing inequalities in learning opportunities and access to labour market. Since the onset of the pandemic, one out of every six young people worldwide has stopped working, while those still employed have experienced a 42 per cent drop in income. Moreover, many young people are not adequately included in social protection systems because of requirements in terms of contributions, formal employment, ~~or age.~~

In paragraph 29 Russia presented this change:

Almost all children have been directly affected by school closures, which have put their education at risk. Unequal access to remote learning options has meant that some have fared better than others. In some countries, school closures risk causing spikes in child labour and neglect. **Girls** are at increased risk of school dropout, **sexual abuse, early pregnancy,** and early and forced marriage. In addition, malnutrition is a threat to the approximately 370 million most disadvantaged children who missed out on school meals in the first half of 2020.

In paragraph 31 Russia presented these changes:

Strengthen nationally appropriate social protection systems for all to address **multiple, often interrelated and** complex causes of poverty and inequality by easing the burden of certain expenditure during periods of unemployment, contributing to health-related goals, gender equality and decent work, and facilitating the full inclusion of persons with disabilities.

In paragraph 33 Russia added:

Provide universal age-, disability-, gender-responsive and family-oriented social protection systems, **which are key to ensuring poverty reduction,** including, as appropriate, targeted cash transfers for people and families in vulnerable situations, such as when headed by a single parent, in particular those headed by women.

In paragraphs 48 and 49 Russia presented these changes:

Strengthen investment in lifelong education, digital literacy, including building digital skills of young people as a way to boosting their future employability **and social inclusion.**

Harness scientific research and expertise and realize the potential of technology **to realize the 2030 Agenda.**

3) Japan:

In paragraph 11 Japan includes “of” in the last line:

The number of food insecure people could almost double (from 135 million in 2019 to 265 million) by the end of 2020, mainly in low and middle-income countries, mainly due to the inability of vulnerable families to purchase food because **of** job and income losses. [SDG2]

In paragraph 27 it is added the following wording (From PP15 of the CSocD Youth resolution)
Japan considers it is important to refer to the problem of underemployment of youth:

The COVID-19 has significant impacts on youth employment, education and training and further exacerbates existing inequalities in learning opportunities and access to labour market. Since the onset of the pandemic, one out of every six young people worldwide has stopped working, while those still employed have experienced a 42 per cent drop in income. **High rates of underemployment, vulnerable employment and informal employment also persist due to lack of adequate labour standards.** Moreover, many young people are not adequately included in social protection systems because of requirements in terms of contributions, formal employment, or age.

In paragraph 30 Japan proposes to correctly reflect the language from OP6 of the CSocD resolution for priority theme:

Universal access to basic social services and social protection

Promote affordable and equitable access to basic services, in particular quality formal and non-formal education, at all levels, **including programmes that promote equality and inclusion through the affirmation of the fundamental dignity of the human person**, and health-care services, including through the acceleration of the transition towards equitable access to universal health coverage, access to affordable housing, nutrition and food, and access to employment and decent work,

4) Colombia

The Permanent Mission of Colombia to the United Nations provides the following comments on the inputs of the Commission for Social Development to the 2021 HLPF and the ECOSOC on the theme *“sustainable and resilient recovery from the covid-19 pandemic that promotes the economic, social and environmental dimensions of sustainable development: building an inclusive and effective path for the achievement of the 2030 agenda in the context of the decade of action and delivery for sustainable development”*:

Comment 1

On the section **“Impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on the implementation of the SDGs under review in the 2021 HLPF from the vantage point of your intergovernmental body, bearing in mind the interlinkages with other SDGs”**, at the end of the subsection **“Decent work”**, Colombia proposes the following paragraph:

“It is important to reaffirm the commitment to the protection of the labor rights of workers. With the pandemic of COVID-19, there has been a surge in the number of working hours according to the ILO. This increase has affected women disproportionately.”

Comment 2

At the subsection **Closing digital divides and promoting digital inclusion**, within the section **“Impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on the implementation of the SDGs under review in the 2021 HLPF from the vantage point of your intergovernmental body, bearing in mind the interlinkages with other SDGs”**, Colombia proposes to strengthen the text by including the following language:

In the fourth paragraph of the section, Colombia puts forward the following addition: “Seek to achieve universal connectivity to ensure that every person has affordable **[Add: and reliable]** access to quality broadband Internet by 2030, including by catalyzing essential partnerships, as well to apply an age-, disability-, gender-responsive and family-oriented approach to all interventions on digital technologies.

In the fifth paragraph, Colombia proposes the following addition: “Develop, as appropriate, a holistic approach and targeted strategies and policies to address specific barriers to digital inclusion and close the digital divides. These should consider national and regional contexts and address the challenges associated with access, affordability, digital literacy, **[Add: inequality, market concentration]** and digital skills, and awareness.

In the eighth paragraph, Colombia considers it is appropriate to include the following text: Strengthen investment in lifelong education, digital literacy, including building digital skills of young people as a way to boosting their future employability and social inclusion **[Add: to create and capture value in the digital economy]**.

The Permanent Mission of Colombia to the United Nations wishes to express that the rationale behind these proposals is their commitment with accelerated and transformative actions in the current decade of action, which will allow us to overcome extreme poverty by 2030, reducing the levels of income inequality, and strengthening the adaptability of our social protection systems. The latter will not be possible without improving access to new technologies for the most vulnerable population and closing the digital divide in rural areas and cities.

5) EU:

As for the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, the EU would like to add its effect on work on para 7.

In paragraph 8, the EU recommends the phrase “provides the blueprint *to recover*” as opposed to “for”

The EU would like to highlight the idea of a whole-of-government approach in the implementation of SDG 3 on health and well-being, which is even more important during the

pandemic. A holistic approach on health in the covid-19 recovery is important, but SDG3 is only mentioned here. In addition, the EU provided inputs on the work of the World Bank that has updated its poverty projections and is referring to between 119 and 124 million new poor in 2020. Estimates taking into account the effects in 2021 range between 143 and 163 million people.

As for the reference to the International Labour Organization Centenary Declaration for the Future of Work, the EU would like to add as well as the Social Protection Floors Recommendation.

The EU also considers convenient to quote the number of countries which extended its social protection in paragraph 17.

In paragraph 20, the EU finds that most of the 'other' measures are also 'social protection' measures, and most of them are touched upon in the second bullet point (paragraph 18)

In paragraph 23 the EU would like to add: Furthermore, COVID-19 related lockdown measures increased the risk for all forms of violence against women and limited the ways in which women who experience violence can access help.

In paragraph 27 the EU would like to add: The COVID-19 has significant impacts on the lives of children and young people, youth employment, education and training in the pandemic and integrative and effective participation of youth, youth-led and youth-focused organizations and other civil society organizations at the local, national, regional and international levels. Furthermore, the pandemic exacerbates existing inequalities in learning opportunities and access to labour market as well as participating opportunities in relevant decision-making processes of young people and their striving for autonomy by the COVID-19 lockdown.

The EU would also like to change the order of this paragraph (place it before the paragraph on persons with disabilities): Children have been directly affected by school closures, which have put their education at risk. Unequal access to remote learning options has meant that some have fared better than others. In some countries, school closures risk causing spikes in child labour and neglect. **Girls** are at increased risk of school dropout, sexual abuse, early pregnancy, and early and forced marriage. In addition, malnutrition is a threat to the approximately 370 million most disadvantaged children who missed out on school meals in the first half of 2020.

In the paragraph on children, the EU suggests to provide the source of this information. In paragraph 31 the EU expressed that the wording seems not to fit properly because it could be read that some expenditures during the time of unemployment could be reduced (prefers to refer to "providing an accessible and adequate basic income support", as opposed to "easing the burden of certain expenditure"). It is also preferred to refer to "... The inclusion of the most vulnerable population groups" in order not to exclude other groups.

To the end of paragraph 31, the EU suggests adding "Further building these systems in a way that they are adaptive and shock-responsive and increase the resilience and adaptive capacity of people and communities before, during and after crises that hit many people at the same time, such as natural and environmental shocks".

In paragraph 32, the EU suggests to promote universal access to 'basic' social services

In order to account for both the revenue and the expenditure side and show potential options for financing of basic social services and social protection as well as reducing inequality, the EU proposes to add this paragraph in the decent work cluster: In order to ensure sustainable financing of such basic services and social protection, promote fair, efficient, transparent and progressive tax systems including anti-corruption mechanisms as well as equitable expenditure mechanisms that benefit people in vulnerable situations.

Regarding the gender equality cluster, the EU proposes to add the following paragraph: Implement measures to increase resources and support for women's and for civil society organizations and to ensure that women who experience violence can rely on a functioning support system during a time of crisis.

Regarding the digital divide cluster, the EU proposes to add the following to paragraph 42: "further promote the use of digital tools for government- citizen (e.g. e-services) and citizen-to-government (e.g. e-participation) interactions."

Regarding the digital divide cluster, the EU also proposes to add the following paragraph (after paragraph 46): "Increase access of older persons to digital technologies by fostering the development and enhancement of digital skills and competences also in the life span after active labor market participation to ensure full participation in social, economic, cultural and political life of older persons.