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Discussion papers on the theme of the high-level political forum on

sustainable development, submitted by major groups and other stakeholders

Note by the Secretariat**

Summary

The present document is a compilation of the executive summaries of the position papers on the theme of the high-level political forum, "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". submitted by the various major groups and other relevant stakeholders that have autonomously established and maintained effective coordination mechanisms for participation in the high-level political forum on sustainable development, in accordance with General Assembly resolution 67/290. The full reports are posted on the website of the forum: https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/hlpf/2021.

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  * E/HLPF/2021/1.

  ** The present document is a compilation of the executive summaries of the thematic papers submitted to the high-level political forum by the major groups and other stakeholders and does not necessarily reflect the views of the United Nations.

Please recycle

I. Women

1. As we gather virtually for the 2021 High Level Political Forum (HLPF), the COVID-19 pandemic continues. We mourn the loss of family, friends, elders, colleagues, and feminist advocates. We mourn those who have lost their lives to COVID-19; to the accidents and health problems that overwhelmed and under-resourced health systems could not respond to; to the violence in our homes; and to the State violence that has occurred during brutal crackdowns. We mourn the loss of life that is to come as Global North countries continue to hoard vaccines and prioritize intellectual property and profits over lives in the Global South.

2. Over one year from the onset of the pandemic, women and girls in all their diversity and their organizations continue to be at the frontlines of the response. Through our paid and unpaid labor, women and girls keep homes, communities, and economies afloat. And yet national and international funders do not prioritize our organizations for support. Moreover, governments, corporations, and non-State actors continue to undermine our ability to effectively and meaningfully participate in policymaking, including through threats, harassment, and violence against women environmental and human rights defenders.

3. We are at the frontlines because government systems - care, health, including SRH, economic and tax, environmental management, and global governance - have been inadequate in responding to the pandemic, especially since these systems were built on inequality, subjugation, and oppression. Patriarchy, white supremacy, colonialism, militarism, neoliberal capitalism, ethno-nationalism, and authoritarianism built the systems that brought us to this moment of intersecting crises. Austerity and privatization pushed by neoliberal capitalism hollowed our public health systems. Militarism, illicit financial flows, tax abuse, and unsustainable debt burdens, emptied public coffers of valuable resources that could, among other things, fund the public care systems women and girls desperately need. Extractive industries and industrial farming driven by colonialism and capitalism have destroyed biodiversity, habitats, territories, and homes.

4. Without systemic change, these structural inequalities will continue to shape our pandemic responses derailing us further from achieving gender equality and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). States should heed the call of feminist advocates and place economic, racial, climate, and gender justice at the center of pandemic recovery and SDGs implementation.

5. The Women's Major Group continues to believe in a multilateral system grounded in human rights. Not a multilateralism that races to the lowest common denominator, but one that fosters global

solidarity and learning. Multilateralism not as the arena for geopolitical skirmishes, but for cooperation. Multilateralism not as another space for the dominance of multinational corporations, but as a space for the people, especially those most marginalized.

6. The HLPF could play a key role in ensuring accountability and pushing for transformational implementation of the SDGs by:

1) Focusing on the systemic barriers to achieving the SDGs;

2) Abandoning the siloed approach to SDGs review;

3) Meaningfully engaging civil society;

4) Emphasizing policy coherence, especially with human rights bodies;

5) Becoming a space to review and act; and

6) Improving linkages between the national, regional, and global levels.

II. Indigenous peoples

7. The COVID 19 pandemic has worsened inequality and amplified the existing systemic discrimination and marginalization of indigenous peoples, further pushing them behind from reaching sustainable development. Many States were taking advantage of the pandemic to restrict fundamental rights and freedoms and to criminalize indigenous leaders who assert the individual and collective rights of indigenous peoples. These measures have resulted in arbitrary arrest and detention as well as extra-judicial killings of indigenous leaders. Further, there is hardly any access to justice for victims and their families.

8. Land-grabbing and resource extraction by the public and private sector also continued during the pandemic with profound impacts on indigenous peoples. The loss of livelihood due to landgrabs and lockdowns has also resulted in more violence and abuse against indigenous women and girls.

9. Resilient recovery from the pandemic needs to ensure access to vaccines of indigenous peoples and the strengthening of public health care systems that are accessible to all without discrimination. Likewise, indigenous peoples' efforts and initiatives to address the pandemic and strengthen their resilience for sustainable recovery must be recognized as critical contributions for advancing sustainable development in the decade of action.

10. The inclusion of indigenous peoples in achieving the SDGs require the respect of fundamental rights and freedoms as well as democratic space that enable their meaningful participation without fear. Likewise, targeted policies, measures and programmes that are fully aligned with the respect of

the rights and wellbeing of indigenous peoples must be developed with their full and effective participation; and sufficiently resourced for proper implementation, monitoring and reporting.

11. The current priority for economic growth for COVID recovery is inconsistent with the need to balance the social, environment and economic dimensions of the SDGs. In fact, many States have weakened their policies for environment protection and restricted democratic participation in order to pursue their economic targets in the guise of pursuing COVID recovery and advancing the SDGs. Likewise, many corporations continue to exploit indigenous peoples' lands and resources for profit but now labelled this exploitation as contributing to the pandemic recovery and supporting sustainable development

12. The decade of action to achieve the SDGs must include the implementation of States' obligations and commitments to human rights including the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples at the national level. Likewise, data disaggregation by ethnicity to make indigenous peoples visible in monitoring and reporting under the follow-up and review processes at all levels is needed. Moreover, the implementation of the recommendations of the human rights system relating to indigenous peoples will accelerate their inclusion in the SDGs as well as in advancing the pledge of leaving no one behind.

13. Inclusive pathways to achieve the SDGs must ensure policy coherence and transformational actions anchored in the recognition of and respect for human rights, environment protection and a paradigm shift to sustainable economic models. We need strong global solidarity, political will and effective accountability mechanisms of States to primarily serve the interest and wellbeing of their citizens including indigenous peoples and to protect the planet.

III. Non-governmental organizations

14. The global COVID-19 pandemic intensifies the need for accelerated, united action. This urgency is amplified by the overwhelming toll the pandemic has taken on global health, social and environmental security, and meaningful progress on Agenda 2030 and leaving no one behind.

15. Women, youth, Indigenous Peoples and marginalised groups are most affected by COVID-19. The rise of populism, isolationism, xenophobia, disregard for multilateral agreements,

sanctions, exploitation of animals and the environment, and regressive stances on human rights present obstacles to sustainable development. Regional and national conflicts, proxy civil wars, accelerating climate crisis, and threats to biodiversity demonstrate this is a moment of extreme peril and opportunity.

16. We have identified structural barriers affecting Sustainable Development Goal progress. In addition to fighting COVID-19, we must challenge the underlying social, economic, environmental, and political factors that exacerbate the effects of the pandemic, including economic inequality, poverty, lack of democracy, gender-based violence and inequality, lack of access to WASH, and various forms of exploitation including human trafficking and environmental destruction. Economic growth without ethical social development is self-defeating. We must invest in human rights and the empowerment of marginalised groups in vulnerable conditions.

17. The pandemic has highlighted inadequate and insecure public health and social protection systems. However, the COVAX initiative has shown how quickly we can take collective action for global good. This positive, yet rare, initiative is tempered by fragmented thinking and action.

18. Least Developed Countries, those with significant rural populations, and Small Island Developing States face additional challenges. Natural disasters, scarcity of resources, lack of strategic financing, and high levels of national debt are particularly damaging elements of myriad intersecting challenges.

19. This document presents concerns and opportunities on specific Goals. The following are the overarching appeals we are highlighting:

 ● For the links between human rights and sustainable development to be recognised as innate, and acted upon;

● For the global collection of disaggregated data to inform decision-making and national Action Plans based on concrete evidence;

● For the inclusion of civil society organisations in all levels of policy-making.

● For the voices of marginalised groups to be protected and amplified.

● For ending the war we have waged with nature, working towards harmony with nature, sustainable food systems, resilient water management, ensuring the wellbeing of humans, animals, and the environment, and reversing current existential environmental threats.

● For Member States to prioritise those excluded and marginalised communities most affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, and to ensure that basic services and social protection systems are universal and equitable. This must include a commitment to preventing future pandemics.

20. Michelle Bachelet, UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, said in November 2020, "People who have been pushed behind, and rendered powerless, by generations of discrimination, have systematically unequal access to services and opportunities... They are placed at a structural disadvantage when it comes to any threat."

21. The NGO Major Group stands in support of this statement and unites in calling for Member States to accelerate their actions to secure the 2030 Agenda and ensure that truly no one is left behind.

IV. Local authorities

22. **Local and regional sustainable policymaking and public service provision is key to the global agendas and to health systems.** Crises stemming from the COVID-19 pandemic have shown the intrinsic link between local public service provision and health systems and the importance that service provision plays in protecting people, the planet, and fostering prosperity and care for all.

23. **Localization requires multilevel governance, shared leadership, and multi-stakeholder coordination, incorporating the 2030 Agenda into local and regional plans, policies and actions**. This means considering a system of intermediary cities, metropolitan entities and regions; and delivering financial support and capacity development for local and regional governments (LRG) to participate. Rooting the 2030 Agenda implementation in territorial priorities allows for a new governance framework, improving day-to-day life.

24. **Efforts shared among LRGs in maintaining service provision and access to culture as an antidote, supported by their networks, civil society and private sector through peer-learning and decentralized cooperation have been critical to mitigate the pandemic.** We need to ensure and reinforce public service provision, universal access to healthcare and basic services for an equitable recovery.

25. **The New Urban Agenda (NUA) is a cornerstone to strengthen the governance that the SDGs need.** We reinstate that the NUA is a prerequisite for SDG localization, an accelerator that provides the scale to implement policies ensuring equality between people and territories.

26. **We call on the international systems and national governments to promote the necessary reforms to strengthen LRG's role and resources,** with adequate regulatory frameworks that allow for aligning national and territorial plans. Unlocking the means of implementation

for LRGs will allow an equal, inclusive, and sustainable recovery of strategic sectors to achieve the SDGs.

27. **Since the adoption of the 2030 Agenda, LRG involvement in monitoring and reporting processes has evolved but Voluntary National Reviews (VLR) and Voluntary Subnational Review (VSR) reporting shows localization varies across countries.** In 2020, in 55% of countries, LRGs have been asked to contribute or been included in the consultations, and processes are increasingly participatory and multi-stakeholder.

28. We call for this process to gain strength across all regions by revising strategies to mobilize and involve LRGs and their associations in the VNR processes, and by **promoting the development of VLR and VSR as policy consolidation opportunities that are integral to foster ownership and achieve the goals**, promoted by Local Government Associations with inputs from all LRGs.

29. The Local Authorities Major Group stresses the need for the high-level political forum to create space for local, regional and national governments to discuss innovative governance mechanisms.

30. We call for a renewed, inclusive forum **that institutionalizes dialogue with LRGs and stakeholders as a means to deliver a multilateral system based on ownership, co-creation, and partnership mechanisms including all actors in decision-making**. An equality-driven system that fully engages LRGs and their associations, able to deliver universal basic services and healthcare powered by a green and sustainable vision, enriched through peer-to-peer cooperation and driven by accountable inclusive institutions at all levels.

V. Workers and trade unions

31. **The Impact of the crisis on the world of work:**

- 8.8 per cent of global working hours were lost for the whole of last year (relative to the fourth quarter of 2019), equivalent to 255 million full-time jobs.
- 8.3 per cent decline in global labour income (before support measures are included), equivalent to 4.4 per cent of global Gross Domestic Product (GDP).
- Globally, employment losses for women stand at 5 per cent, versus 3.9 per cent for men. Women were much more likely than men to drop out of the labour market and become inactive.

- During the COVID-19 crisis, workers in non-standard, precarious and informal work have been disproportionately impacted by job loss, and these groups have been least likely to be covered by social protection.

- Increase of violations of workers and trade union rights, concerning in particular non-compliance with labour regulations with regard to layoffs, working hours and the payment of wages and Occupational Safety and Health (OSH).

- Although there was a decrease of CO_2 emissions, it was not at the expected rate, which means that just transition measures implementation are more stringent than ever.

32. Through its targets on workers protection, decent work, social protection, inclusive growth and environmental preservation SDG 8 is multidimensional by nature and has the power to drive the 2030 Agenda forward.

**Figure 1. Evidence-based SDG 8 correlations with other Agenda 2030 goals:**

This representation shows the connections between SDG 8 and the other Goals based on a network text analysis of all 169 targets of the 2030 Agenda. **The thickness of the links expresses the strength of the relationship** and clearly shows the centrality of SDG 8 in the whole framework of the 2030 Agenda. *Source: International Trade Union Federation/Italian Alliance for Sustainable Development (ITUC/ASviS)*[1]

33. As demonstrated by the ITUC SDG 8 global composite indicator[1], the world was not on track on SDG 8 achievement even before the pandemic. The majority of the world countries perform below the world average (100) and, although high

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[1] SDG decade of action - trade union policy responses https://www.ituc-csi.org/sdg-decade-of-action-trade-union-policy-responses

income countries are performing better, there is still a long way ahead also for wealthier countries (max rating 130):

Figure 2. Results of SDG 8 global composite indicator by income groups (Low; Lower middle; Upper middle; High)
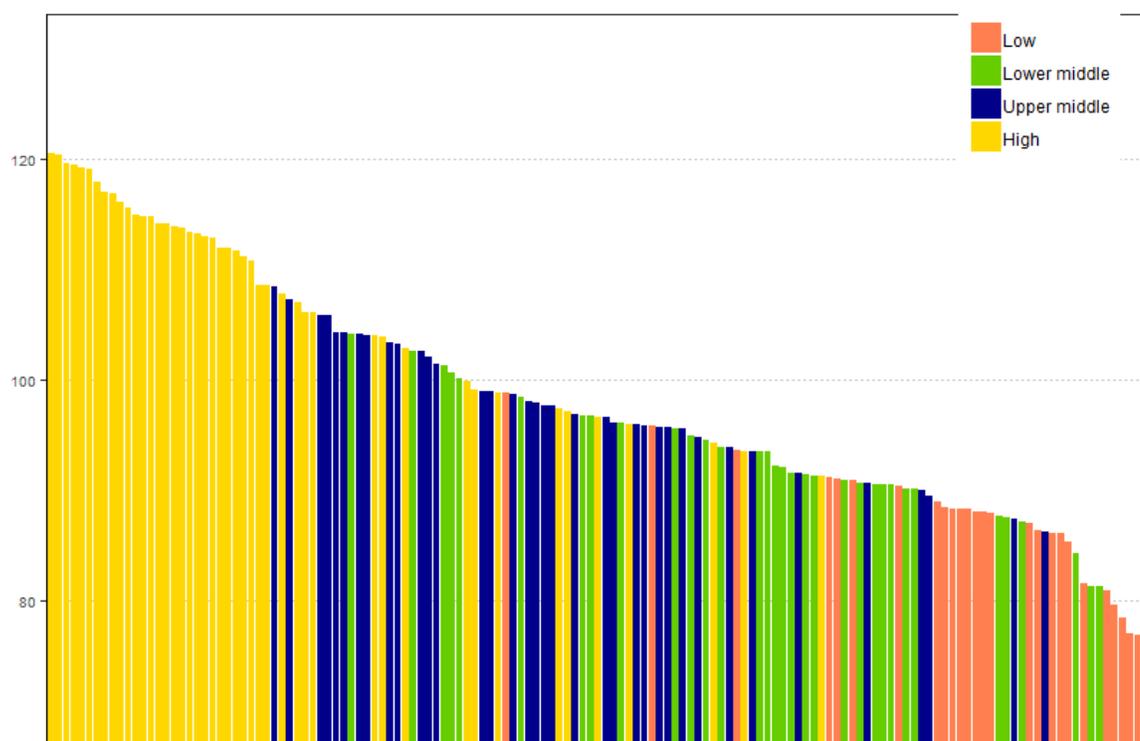
34. There are significant positive spill-over effects between SDG 8 and other Goals. For example, as shown by the figures below, good performances of SDG 8 are positively correlated with low poverty headcount rates (SDG 1.1.1) and low rates of income inequality; with higher female share of employment in managerial positions (SDG 5.5.2) and with higher secondary education enrolment (SDG 4.1.1)[2].

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[2] Ibidem

Figure 3. SDG 8 and poverty, inequality, gender, and education

SDG 8 and Poverty	SDG 8 and Inequality
SDG 8 and Gender Parity	SDG 8 and Education
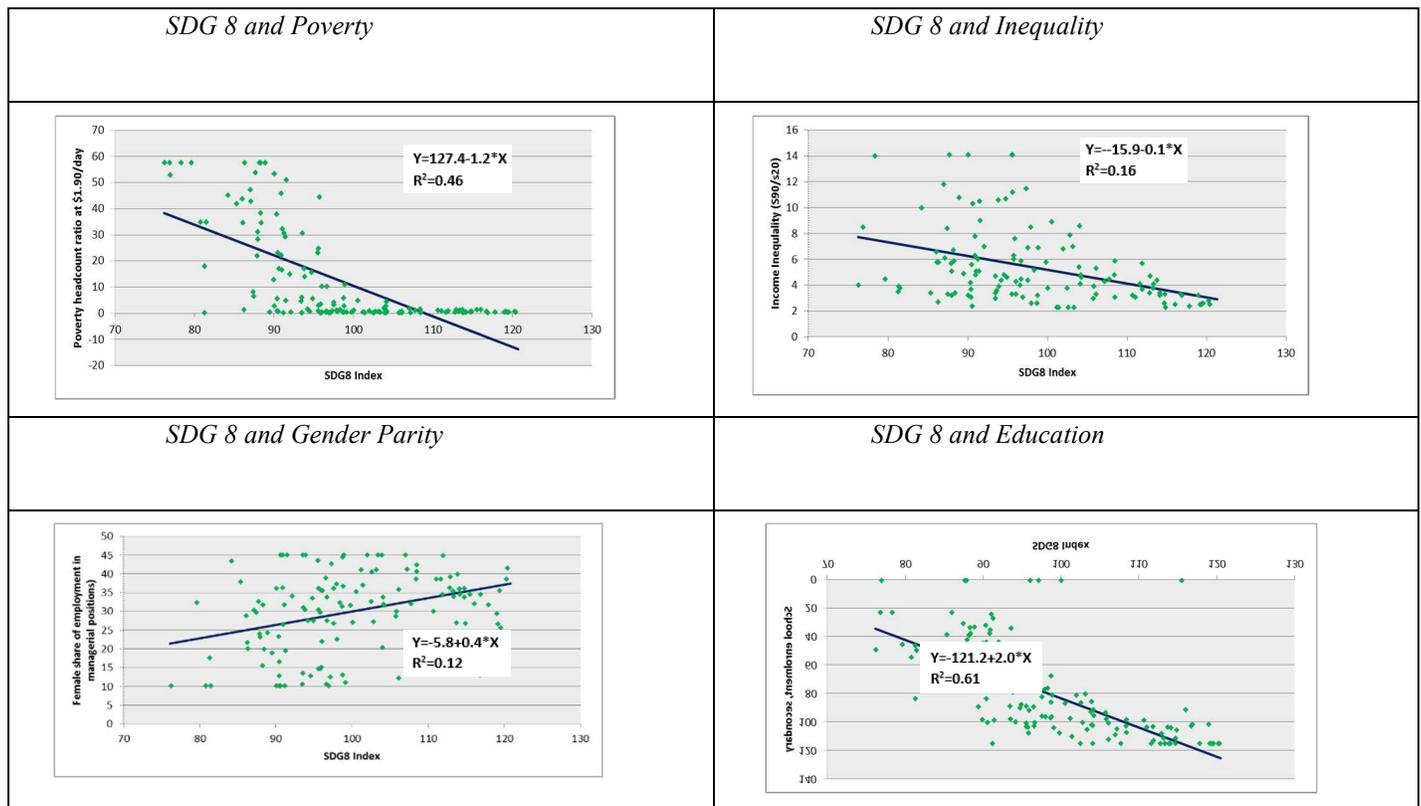
35. However, this means that the crisis negative impact on SDG 8 targets means a wider slow down on many other targets across the whole Agenda 2030.

Policies for crisis recovery and resilience

36. SDG 8 is central to implementing these key demands, to pull us all out of this crisis:

a. Strategies and public policies must ensure the creation of decent and climate-friendly jobs, accompanied by Just Transition measures, to guarantee that no-one is left behind in industrial transformation processes. Large numbers of jobs can be created through sustainable investments in infrastructure, health, public transport, housing, repairing ecosystems and making innovative improvements to cities.

b. Advancing towards universal social protection systems and floors is crucial to providing free access to healthcare for all as well as income support to the most vulnerable, including informal economy workers. A global social protection fund – as proposed by the UN Special Rapporteur of Extreme Poverty and Human Rights- would effectively help the world's poorest countries.

c. More sustainable responses to the crisis are delivered when social partners are engaged[3]. Social dialogue and industrial relations help to rebuild trust in institutions and assist in crafting equitable policies. This is true within countries, but also across nations. A truly inclusive multilateral system where social partners are on board and have a say will make the difference and pave the way to global resilience.

VI. Education and Academia Stakeholder Group

37. The COVID-19 pandemic has created the most severe disruption to global education systems in history, forcing more than 1.6 billion learners in over 190 countries out of school at the peak of the crisis. All sectors and levels of education and learning were negatively affected: formal and non-formal education, schools, universities, community learning centres, adult literacy courses, etc. Not only learners - teachers, parents and family members were affected too.

38. Schools closure meant not only loosing chance to continue education and learning, but for millions of children, it meant losing a lifeline, necessary socialisation, safety, a meal, a chance for a better future. Moreover, this is threatening the progress made towards gender equality- being out of schools means bigger risk of adolescent pregnancy, early and forced marriage, and violence, for many girls around the globe.

39. There are two obvious ways in which education helps people to cope with the new situation that COVID-19 presents – teaching about health, viruses, prevention measure, new behaviour. Education also plays a role in teaching people how to better use digital technology, as it enables them to continue learning, schooling, learning skills that help them to find a job or to work from home.

40. But the pandemic exposed clear need for other types of content, which should be considered in the recovery period. Not only provision of health education and digital skills should be increased, but also media literacy, critical thinking and civic education, because of the increased need for information, orientation and critical understanding that people have in time of crises (esp. regarding fake news, conspiracy theories, etc.). Civic education should raise awareness about the importance of upholding human rights during the pandemic, because authoritarian regimes used pandemic as an opportunity to cut civic rights, freedom of speech, participation of citizens, etc. Education and learning should includes awareness towards the ways in which people participate in democratic societies and decision making. Also central is sharing

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[3] SDGs for recovery and resilience - Case studies: Argentina, Chile and Colombia: https://www.ituc-csi.org/IMG/pdf/sdgs_for_recovery_and_resilience_latinamerica-executive_summary-en.pdf

information and raising awareness about the global issues of sustainable development, anthropogenic climate change and environmental degradation that could cause or encourage the spread of new diseases.

41. While online and remote learning did help to bridge the gap and disruption that pandemic caused in education, and showed many advantages that ICT and digital technologies offer for the lifelong learning and education, the exclusive focus on online technologies could leave millions behind, increase existing digital gaps and thus reduce the potential support learning can provide to achieve other SDGs. For many areas of education, and for many marginalised group, in-person instruction will remain an important form, so the recovery efforts should find the adequate balance.

42. The pandemic deepened inequities in accessing and benefiting from education and revealed the challenges to education that have not been adequately addressed before. In order to guarantee everyone's right to education, it is necessary to focus on the recovery of education system: schools and other educational institution, as well as on lifelong learning opportunities at every age. Further on, it is important to tackle systemic inequality and discrimination, and to use education and lifelong learning to prevent future crises, or to mild their consequences. It is necessary to invest more, to increase quality, to support teachers and educators, so they can cope with the new challenges, and to focus on those most excluded from education opportunities.

43. Education and learning help not only to think about 'new normal', but also help to re-think and critically address the problems of 'old normal' - uneven global development, power structures, and socio-economic disparities that lead to increased gaps, widen inequalities and injustice, with every new crises.

VII. Business and Industry Group

44. The private sector has been at the forefront of tackling the pandemic – from the historic race to develop vaccines, to opening up premises to production of PPE and vaccination campaigns, to training and educating employees on public health and safety. It is in everyone's interest that that health services and vaccines are equally accessible for all. The pandemic has put into stark relief the pressing need for countries to addressing informality and sustainable social protection systems.

45. Private enterprises have also been hit hard by the pandemic, resulting in growing poverty and vulnerability – business closures due to pandemic restrictions have resulted in nearly a 9% decline in working hours and an increase of 81 million persons outside the labour force.[4] The review of SDG 8 on Decent work and Economic Growth during this year's HLPF will be more crucial than ever to create a roadmap for a job-rich recovery and to get us back on track to achieve the SDGs.

46. Recovering sustainably in the Decade of Action and Delivery will require a stronger than ever commitment to multi-stakeholder engagement and partnership in inclusive intergovernmental deliberations. The private sector must be a meaningful partner in building back better – contributing not just funding, but innovation, expertise, technology, fresh ideas, and diverse perspectives of business and employers, particularly SMEs, who are so crucial to economic growth at the local level.

47. We urge Member States and the UN Development System to bring in diverse stakeholders, including representative business groups and employer federations, into the formulation of UN Cooperation Frameworks, UN Common Country Analyses, as well in the preparation of Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs). Doing so would ensure that programming more effectively reflects the reality on the ground and leverages the valuable perspectives and contributions of the private sector, including SMEs, to tackle the most pressing issues.

48. We recommend that the 2021 High Level Forum prioritize and support:
    a. Cross-sectoral partnership and cooperation with business, including at national (through Resident Coordinators) and regional levels, not only in relation to investment and finance, but also across the entire gamut of the SDGs.
    b. New ways of conducting meetings that truly enhance substantive engagement of business and other stakeholders, and that recognizes the distinct role of business.
    c. Support and provide new and concrete engagement mechanisms, institutional infrastructure and opportunities for the UN system, governments, businesses and other stakeholders to come together on achieving the SDGs.
    d. We look forward to engaging with Member States, the UN system, and all other stakeholders at the 2021 HLPF at this critical time when hope is on the horizon, but realizing it will require bold and collective action, and institutional innovation, building on the recommendations of the UN75 report. We stand ready to do our part.

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[4] International Labour Organization (ILO), COVID-19 and labour statistics, 2020

VIII.   Persons with disabilities

49. Leave no one behind must remain at the core of all work to advance inclusive development. In response to this year's HLPF theme, the Stakeholder Group of Persons with Disabilities offers Member States and the United Nations system the recommendations outlined below for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals for persons with disabilities, recognizing the important interaction with the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (the CRPD).

50. **COVID-19.** Persons with disabilities are disproportionately negatively affected by the COVID-19 pandemic as well as by discriminatory healthcare systems and policies. Governments and the United Nations system should act to ensure the rights of persons with disabilities in COVID-19 response and recovery.

51. **Vaccinations.** Persons with disabilities should be prioritized to receive vaccinations because they have face increased risks in the pandemic, and been left behind both before and during the COVID-19 response. This is essential to ensure they will not be left further behind, "experiencing disproportionate loss of lives and livelihoods, inaccessible healthcare services, and undignified lives and aggravated disconnection from…society."[1]

52. **Employment.** Prior to the pandemic, persons with disabilities were already facing widespread exclusion from the labour market, which has only been exacerbated. Dismantling barriers to employment for persons with disabilities must be central to government responses in order to guarantee that that they will be sustainable and resilient.

53. **Poverty.** Persons with disabilities are disproportionally affected by multidimensional poverty.[2] Persons with disabilities often face barriers to access services, information, education, and employment. These barriers result in being less likely to participate economically, resulting in poverty.[3] Governments should uphold the CRPD's standards on the right to access to social protection and poverty reduction programs, including assistance to offset the cost of disability-related expenses for persons with disabilities living in poverty.[4]

54. **Data.** Data collection and disaggregation on persons with disabilities should be increased and include the Washington Group short set of questions in all household surveys and censuses to ensure that policymakers address gaps. Statisticians must start collecting disability data and inform policymakers, who, in collaboration with organizations of persons with disabilities and in line with the CRPD,

must enact new evidence- based regulations and laws to ensure the inclusion and equal participation of persons with disabilities in society.

55. **Accessibility.** Persons with disabilities should have access, on an equal basis with others, to the built environment, information and communication, technology, systems and other facilities, in line with the CRPD and the 2030 Agenda. The Secretary-General has reported on the implementation of the UN Disability Inclusion Strategy[5] toward disability inclusion throughout the United Nations system. Progress on accessibility and inclusion should continue to be advanced.

IX. Volunteer groups

56. **Volunteers** are 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.

57. Volunteers, and support for their efforts, are essential to not only the successful implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development but also the sustainable and resilient recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic, and volunteer groups are heartened by the **growing acknowledgement of the role of the volunteers in the implementation of the Goals.**

Recommendations

58. The Stakeholder group representing volunteers offers the following recommendations to the High-level Political Forum (HLPF) for 2021, and beyond:

1.   Formally recognise the contribution of volunteering to the implementation of the SDGs in Member States' <u>Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs)</u> at the HLPF 2021
All Member States should include the contribution of volunteers in their VNRs. In 2020, countries around the world as diverse as Benin, Brunei Darussalam, India, Kenya, Malawi, North Macedonia, Republic of Moldova, Russian Federation, Samoa, and Slovenia all strongly substantiated positive contribution of volunteering to SDGs in their VNRs.

2.   Ensure that volunteer groups are fully recognised and supported in <u>national plans and strategies</u> for implementing the 2030 Agenda
Every country should build volunteering into their plans and strategies. Currently, nearly 100 countries throughout the world have policies or legislation on volunteering, including legislation that supports and promotes volunteering.

3. **Follow the lead of Member States by affirming their full support for the implementation of A/RES/67/290, which <u>supports the participation of non-governmental actors</u>**

All governments should continue to engage all stakeholders as contributors to and beneficiaries of policies that will allow us all to work towards the 2030 Agenda. The 2018 resolution A/RES/73/140 commends volunteers and calls on Member States to increasingly cooperate with volunteer involving and civil society organisations. This resolution also calls on Member States to include information on the scale, contribution, and impact of volunteering in future VNRs, and to engage volunteers for the monitoring of progress towards achieving the SDGs at the national and subnational levels and as part of wider citizen engagement.

4. **Ensure that the accountability, transparency, and review framework for the SDGs involves community consultation at all levels, including representation of the most marginalised voices, as well as the <u>volunteers</u> who work most closely with them**

All Member States should consult with volunteer groups and include volunteers and the most marginalised voices as part of the mechanism to review the SDGs at national and local levels.

5. Formally recognize the <u>role of volunteering</u> in crisis prevention, management, and resolution

Volunteers and groups organising volunteers are working daily to meet the SDGs in their local communities and are at the front lines of Covid-19 relief, climate change action, and other extraordinary situations. Volunteers are helping **build back better**.

X. Ageing

59. Sustainable and resilient recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic and achieving the Sustainable Development Goals necessitate bold actions. Older persons have paid a heavy toll during Covid-19. Age-inclusive recovery, to ensure that older persons are not left behind, requires:

- Addressing severe violations of their human rights;
- Recognizing their contributions to the economy, society and family;
- Enshrining their rights in national and international legislation.

60. Unprecedented global attention was drawn to the unequal healthcare treatment for COVID-19 in the form of priority setting that excluded and discriminated against older

persons. Older persons were stigmatized, found abandoned, abused, neglected and dead in care institutions and in their homes, lacking safeguards to long-term and palliative care, or home-based health care. They were denied access to treatments, protective equipment and vaccines, particularly in low and middle income countries. Affordable preventive care, treatment, rehabilitation, and long-term care including palliative care must be accessible for persons of all ages in all settings.

61. In the absence of job security and flexible retirement regulations, many older workers became unemployed, were dismissed, or forced to retire against their wishes, without adequate social protection. Job loss resulted in their significant overrepresentation among the long-term unemployed. Lockdowns hit older workers in the informal sector particularly hard. Increased poverty threatened the right to a decent life and dignity.

62. Overcoming ageism in the world of work entails social protection, including safety nets for informal workers. Obstacles to labour market participation of older workers must be overcome by adhering to international obligations for equal treatment of workers at all ages, introducing incentives to employ and retain older workers, providing lifelong learning opportunities and digital access. Ageist stereotypes persist – despite the economic need to employ a growing share of older workers to sustain growth.

63. Access to justice has been hampered for older persons by lockdowns of legal institutions, complex proceedings, lack of access to information and excessive costs in the absence of a globally agreed monitoring mechanism to provide evidence on the worsening health, social and economic status of older persons.

64. Barriers to achieving the SDGs related to poverty, health, decent work, economic growth and gender equality, include age discrimination in law and practice. Ageing is not a problem; ageism is the problem.

65. The Stakeholder Group on Ageing urges Member States to:

    a. embrace the contributions of older persons;

    b. implement the UN Decade of Healthy Ageing;

    c. fully implement international labour standards and guarantees of older workers' rights to decent work and social protection;

    d. combat ageism by abolishing all forms of age exclusion and age discrimination; and

    e. establish legal measures to ensure equality and access to justice.

66. An inclusive path for recovery and accomplishment of the SDGs includes:

    a.   empowerment of older persons with age-inclusive legislation and policies;

    b.   achievement of a just society for all people of all ages;

    c.   development of a convention to protect the rights of older persons.

XI. Asia-Pacific regional civil society organization engagement

67. Unless we deal with the systemic failures that render exploited groups more vulnerable, there will be no recovery for COVID-19. The ESCAP SDGs Report 2021 shows that Asia Pacific is not on track to achieve most of Agenda 2030, and the pandemic has further pushed the region off-track. The pandemic presses the need to dismantle the neoliberal development model to realize a transformative, fairer and resilient future for all.

68. *Resilient and Sustainable Recovery from COVID-19 cannot be realized* without **addressing systemic barriers** to sustainable development. The crisis has exacerbated prevalent inequalities of wealth, power and resources exposing the violence of neoliberalism, corporatisation and capitalist hegemony hijacking our democracies, international economic, trade and monetary frameworks restricting state policy space, militarism breeding conflict, patriarchy widening authoritarianism across state and social institutions, and flawed governance marginalizing the poorest. The crisis has exposed the lack of political will across key strategic sectors like health, education and social protection, a decent standard of living, and a safe eco system. The crisis has uncovered globalized capitalism as the catalyst of calamities and proven the failure of neoliberal development at large.

69. HLPF's thematic and ministerial segments must analyse the systemic determinants of lacking progress. The process should focus on efficient recovery for developing, least developing and countries in special situations by reducing debt distress, curbing illicit financial flows, and protecting state policy space to safeguard public interest through fundamental reconfiguration of global economic, trade, tax, monetary and financial frameworks. Rather than pushing poor countries for domestic resource mobilization, multilateral processes should synergize taxation architecture to avoid massive tax evasions; help resist debt conditionalities designed to constrict public financing across key sectors; and, help redress hegemonic trade rules and agreements, with instruments like ISDS plundering billions of dollars away from nation states leaving no fiscal space for development or sustainability.

70. **On VNR,** the process needs to be democratized to avoid tokenistic representation and to involve subalternized voices for inclusive and transparent progress reviews. National VNR processes must recognize the potential of citizen-led and civil society generated data for measuring change.

71. **The HLPF**, needs an annual comprehensive review of all SDGs goals and must reassess the current clustered approach in the next HLPF cycle. There needs to be (i) Interim VNRs submissions to the regional forums and mechanism for VNR follow up reporting in the region; and (ii) Systematic integration of regional forum outcomes and perspectives into the HLPF with a continuous feedback loop into regional, sub-regional and national levels for efficient follow up.

72. Peoples movements, grassroots communities and civil society in Asia and the Pacific propose a clear vision of COVID-19 recovery. It emphasizes the possibility to realize a rights-based people-centered development model that addresses inequalities of wealth, power and resources within and among countries, between rich and the poor, and between men and women as well as other marginalized groups. It proposes Development Justice - that strives for redistributive, economic, environmental, social and gender justice, and accountability to peoples - as the way forward for people and planet.

XII.Communities Discriminated by Work and Descent

73. **The Communities Discriminated on Work and Descent (CDWD),** numbering more than 260 million people across the world, are among the most marginalised and excluded peoples, many of whom are persons living in conditions of slavery often tied to descent. They are more commonly known as Dalits, Roma-Sinti, Quilombola, Burakumin, Haratine, Oru, Shambara amongst many other names. They lack public recognition or acknowledgements within and beyond the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

74. **The COVID-19 pandemic** has cemented social hierarchies and aggravated discrimination and systematic exclusion of CDWD. Marginalisation, discrimination and exclusion are compounded when intersectional CDWD face multiple discrimination, not only because of work and descent, but also on the basis of their gender identity, disability, age and/or sexual orientation, to name but a few, live on their daily wage or work in the informal sector. As farmers, factory workers, domestic help, sweepers, waste collectors, street vendors or sanitation workers, they are forced to perform menial jobs with their bare hands or minimal tools related to human sanitation and human and animal death. Many lost all sources of income because of the pandemic.

75. Access to water, hygiene products and sanitation facilities were severely restricted. This situation escalated in South Asia during the summer months when infections peaked, Dalits were restricted from accessing public water/sanitation facilities for being considered "unclean". Governments failed to ensure access to these facilities across the globe for CDWD.

76. There have been several cases of CDWD being discriminated against in cases of access to quarantine facilities, economic relief packages, and other social security measures, especially women among them. There have been severe consequence on the mental health of community members. unemployment, inability to provide for the family, increased cases of discrimination and violence have resulted in an increase in cases of suicide during this time.

   Recommendations:
   1. Roll out of a People's Vaccine, prioritizing the most vulnerable, including CDWD communities to leave no one behind and forgotten. (Goal 3, 10)
   2. A call for a global social protection fund, "Shared responsibility, global solidarity: responding to the socioeconomic impacts of COVID-19" detailed in the report by Secretary-General of the same with implications to achieve all SDGs.
   3. Implement country and community specific interventions to provide the most immediate needs of the most vulnerable such as healthcare (including mental healthcare), water and sanitation, food, education and help and shelter for those who suffer domestic violence and abuse. (Goals 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6)
   4. Take note and implement necessary regulatory provisions to protect CDWD and other minority groups from (online) discrimination and hate speech and resulting violence and discrimination as detailed by the Special Rapporteur on Minority Rights in his repot in March 2021 (A/HRC/46/57) with direct implications for the SDGs (Goals 1.4, 4.5, 5.2, 5.4, 5.5, 5.a, 8.5, 8.8, 10.3).
   5. To achieve conditions of decent work and alleviate some of the negative effects of the pandemic, land tenure and ownership has been named as a vital condition for CDWD (Goal 1, 2, 3, 8, 10).

XIII. LGBTI

77. The COVID-19 pandemic has profoundly impacted populations globally in every aspect of life. While harmful to all, COVID-19 has been especially taxing on marginalized populations. Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and intersex (LGBTI) populations continue to experience stigma, discrimination, and violence based on sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, and sex characteristics (SOGIESC), and face high barriers in accessing development, experiences which have been exacerbated by the pandemic.

78. The disproportionate impact of COVID on LGBTI populations was evidenced in several civil society reports highlighting numerous pandemic responses that have replicated forms of discrimination, increased social and political inequalities, and reinforced barriers in accessing education, employment, healthcare, food, and shelter, aggravating already existing vulnerabilities and violence faced by LGBTI populations.

79. Among other measures contributing to increased vulnerability, the following were pervasive: the enactment of selective restrictions against LGBTI persons to peacefully assemble on the basis of COVID spread prevention; limitations and disruptions of HIV prevention and anti-retroviral therapy programs, as well as of access to hormonal treatments or gender affirming services; the exclusion of LGBTI populations from humanitarian aid programs, especially for trans and non-binary persons who have been unable to access relief efforts due to not having identification documents reflecting their own identity; higher rates of domestic, family, and intimate partner violence, coupled with decreased support services due to pandemic control measures; and the exclusion of LGBTI populations from social protection measures in an environment of elevated job loss, experiences of greater financial and food insecurity, poverty, and homelessness.

80. The current health and economic crisis highlights the fundamental need for universal healthcare, social floor, social protection and access to justice measures. Urgent responses are required from States and other stakeholders to end criminalization and pathologization of LGBTI populations, decrease barriers to accessing human development, and to create and implement public policies, laws, and programs that include and address the needs of LGBTI populations and guarantee they are not furthest left behind.

81. Sustainable and resilient recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic requires an inclusive approach to development. These approaches should be free from assumptions of hetero-cis-normativity, respond to misconceptions and stereotypes that are often used to exclude LGBTI people from development activities, and must be designed, implemented and evaluated with regard to all, regardless of sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, and sex characteristics (SOGIESC).

82. In light of the 2021 theme of HLPF, "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", the LGBTI Stakeholder Group calls on all stakeholders to ensure pandemic responses and recovery policies are inclusive of all - including LGBTI populations - and to guarantee that all are free from violence and discrimination in order to promote a sustainable and resilient recovery. Measures adopted by States must comply with principles of equality and non-discrimination, participation, empowerment and accountability, always following a human-rights framework and the inclusion of those most marginalized in all stages of "building back better" to achieve the 2030 Agenda.

XIV. Financing for Development (FfD)

83. The humanitarian and economic crisis triggered by the pandemic is threatening the well-being of billions of people. Inequalities within and between countries have been magnified, with unpaid domestic and care work subsidizing the global economy.

84. We urgently call for the below systemic solutions to the broken global economic architecture:

    a. **Debt cancellations and establishment of a Sovereign Debt Workout Mechanism at the UN to address unsustainable and illegitimate debt**. The pandemic has increased the risk of a new wave of debt crises, and systemic solutions will be vital to avoid devastating impacts, especially on developing countries;

    b. **UN Tax Convention to address tax havens, tax abuse by multinational corporations and other illicit financial flows through a universal, intergovernmental process at the UN**. Unless the failures of the international tax system are urgently addressed, countries around the world will continue to lose billions of dollars due to illicit financial flows;

    c. **A moratorium on Investor-State-Dispute-Settlement (ISDS) cases**, removal of all ISDS provisions in bilateral investment treaties and trade agreements, and non-implementation of current trade and investment commitments, including Intellectual property rights rules through **the TRIPS and TRIPS plus agreements**, if these conflict with public policy objectives, during the pandemic.

    d. **Review development outcomes of public-private-partnerships and 'private finance first' approach and reaffirm the centrality of public policies and investments**. The pandemic

has provided a stark reminder of the importance of accessible and affordable public services and the short-comings of development models that prioritize private profit over public needs;

e. **Review of the official development assistance (ODA) framework to immediately reverse the decline in ODA, fulfil and where possible exceed the 0.7% target for ODA in the form of unconditional grants**. It is vital that the long-standing commitments to deliver international development assistance, including ensuring quality and effectiveness, are realised;

f. **Assess systemic risks posed by unregulated or inadequately regulated financial sector instruments and actors**: This includes regulation of Credit Rating Agencies, global agreement on importance of capital account management and urgent need for new allocation of Special Drawing Rights (SDRs) commensurate with the level of need among developing countries;

g. **Global technology assessment mechanism at the UN**: As the UN, governments and institutions grapple with the governance of digital technologies, there is an urgent need for transparent and inclusive deliberations on the current and potential impacts of these technologies on the environment, labour market, tax policy, livelihoods and society;

h. **Ensure fiscal space and scale up international cooperation for universal social protection:** The pandemic illustrates the importance of ensuring adequate fiscal space to support the extension of social protection systems to ensure universal coverage through social protection floors, in line with ILO standards.

i. Some of these critical decisions have been in a stalemate and it is time to agree on a new consensus that allows real progress in tackling the pandemic and advance the 2030 Agenda.

j. **We therefore call on UN Member States to mandate the organisation of the next UN Summit on Financing for Development.** In the context of the global crisis, this could be in the form of an International Economic Reconstruction and Systemic Reform Summit, as proposed by the Civil Society FfD Group,[5] to move towards a new global economic architecture that works for the people and planet.

XV. Scientific and technological community

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[5] https://csoforffd.org/global-economic-solutions-now/

85. Scientific and Technological Community Major Group position paper for the 2021 HLPF Executive summary

86. Impact: The pandemic abruptly disrupted implementation of actions focused on achieving many of the SDGs and, in some cases, reversed hard-won progress. The measures taken to mitigate its impact caused an abrupt loss of jobs and the closure of millions of enterprises and factories. Globally, extreme poverty is on the rise for the first time in 20 years, with the pandemic driving up acute hunger in countries already experiencing food crises, creating new hunger hotspots across the globe. It has further exposed the rising threat posed by global inequality to the health, wellbeing and security of all people.

87. Warning: The pandemic is a symptom of the devastating impacts of anthropogenic activities on natural ecosystems. It comes as a timely warning of the need to urgently and drastically transform human actions and relations, including with nature. Returning to the pre-pandemic normal is not an option. Profound systemic transformations are needed to stabilize the Earth system, which is currently threatened by further destruction of biodiversity, ecosystem degradation, air and water pollution, destabilization of climate and general devastation of our natural capital

88. Opportunity: The Scientific and Technological Community Major Group stresses the unique opportunity provided by the current crisis for substantial climate action and for safeguarding and restoring our natural capital. In this context, recovery must not entail reinstating historical development pathways, and should instead focus on new investments to lock humanity into more sustainable pathways. To do otherwise risks global average temperature increases well beyond 2°C, leading to catastrophic consequences for humanity and life on Earth.

92. Transformation: The Scientific and Technological Community Major Group calls for a truly transformative recovery that is centred on and aligned with the principles of the SDGs. While fighting to bring the pandemic to an end, Governments must foster sustainable and equitable economic recovery, and jointly address the climate and biodiversity emergencies, while leaving no-one and no place behind. Scientific and engineering communities should be given a more proactive role in the fight against COVID-19 and in the pursuit of a truly transformative recovery.

93. Just Transition: The Scientific and Technological Major Group calls for a recovery process that ensures a just transition to decarbonised and sustainable futures and focuses on building more creative, engaged and resilient societies better equipped to prevent,

prepare for and tackle future crises. The growing risks of major planetary disruptions, compounded by rising inequalities and new forms of vulnerability pose existential threats. These multi-level risk-creation and risk-amplifying processes could drastically undermine all attempts to achieve sustainable development and erode the social and environmental foundations on which we depend to live and thrive.

94. Diversity: The Science and Technological Community Major Group emphasizes the importance of utilizing diverse knowledge and engineering practice to help transform mindsets, leadership and action, and to craft innovative, efficient, applicable and sustainable solutions to today's urgent challenges. We stand ready to work with all stakeholders to devise feasible and implementable science-informed solutions to help decision-makers and societies recover from COVID-19 and build more equitable, resilient and sustainable futures. Simultaneously, we are ready to lead the path to more ethical and inclusive use of technology that fosters sustainable innovation and benefits society at large.

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