



## HIGH-LEVEL POLITICAL FORUM ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

***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***

**Tuesday, 6 July 2021**

**Tuesday, 6 July 2021, 9:00 AM-10:00 AM**

### **Opening**

#### **Background on the session:**

The theme for the 2021 United Nations high-level political forum on sustainable development (HLPF) and ECOSOC is “*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*”.<sup>1</sup>

With the pandemic still raging in many parts of the world, the degree to which the SDGs have been knocked further off track is not yet fully known. As the Secretary-General report on progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) shows, however, it is clear that the pandemic has already had a very significant impact in a number of areas, undermining decades of development efforts<sup>2</sup>.

The HLPF will review the situation regarding all SDGs and discuss in depth Sustainable Development Goals 1 on no poverty, 2 on zero hunger, 3 on good health and well-being, 8 on decent work and economic growth, 10 on reduced inequalities, 12 on responsible consumption and production, 13 on climate action, 16 on peace, justice and strong institutions, and 17 on partnerships and their interlinkages with each other and with other SDGs.

Learning from the 44 Voluntary National Reviews that will be presented this year, the HLPF will allow peer learning and reflect on the kind of policies that are being implemented to respond to the pandemic and its impacts.

The HLPF will provide political leadership, guidance and recommendations on the kind of policies and cooperation that are necessary to overcome the pandemic and its impacts and put the world back on track to achieve the SDGs by 2030, within the decade of action and delivery for sustainable development.

#### **Chair:**

- **H.E. Mr. Munir Akram**, President of Economic and Social Council

<sup>1</sup> GA resolution 74/298

<sup>2</sup> [https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/27610SG\\_SDG\\_Progress\\_report\\_2021.pdf](https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/27610SG_SDG_Progress_report_2021.pdf)



## HIGH-LEVEL POLITICAL FORUM ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

### Opening remarks:

- **H.E. Mr. Munir Akram**, President of Economic and Social Council

### Presentation:

- **H.E. Mr. Juan Sandoval Mendiola**, Vice President of Economic and Social Council, on messages from the Integration segment of ECOSOC

### Keynote address

**Tuesday, 6 July 2021, 10:00 AM-12:00 PM**

### **The SDGs in time of crisis: A sustainable, inclusive and resilient recovery from COVID-19 as an opportunity to realize the SDGs**

Where do we stand on the SDGs given the dramatic impacts of COVID-19? Discussion based on the SG's SDG progress report and experiences of countries at various development levels, including MICs and other actors?

What kind of policies can address COVID-19's impacts while putting us on track to realize the SDGs? This session will discuss resilience of health systems, equitable access to vaccine; social protection; challenges with learning/education; impacts on gender and economic dimensions

The COVID-19 pandemic has a significant impact on the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, undermining decades of development efforts. In 2020, over 100 million people were pushed back into poverty and hunger; an equivalent of 255 million full-time jobs were lost; and an additional 101 million children and youth fell below the minimum reading proficiency level, wiping out the education gains achieved over the last two decades. Violence against women and girls has intensified and child marriage is also expected to increase. The economic slowdown associated with COVID-19 has done little to slow the climate crisis. Instead it has reinforced and exacerbated existing inequalities and threatened the achievements of the SDGs.

At the same time, the pandemic led to scientific breakthroughs with the development of effective vaccines, demonstrating the power of science, innovation, and public-private partnerships. Yet, developing countries' equitable access to vaccines remains a major challenge due to political, technical and logistical hurdles. This has elicited strong calls for COVID-19 vaccines to be a global public good. Vaccine equity remains a prerequisite for a sustainable, inclusive and resilient recovery from COVID-19 everywhere.

Countries are still struggling to find the appropriate response to the pandemic and its social and economic impacts. While important stimulus packages have been implemented, the measures taken so far have often fallen short of the response required to overcome the Impacts of the pandemic and move to a track to realize the SDGs. They have not boosted long-term investments in the SDGs, nor created new jobs or sufficiently supported transitions to carbon neutrality and environmental sustainability and supported the furthest behind.

Economic resilience with new fiscal and debt sustainability frameworks, societal resilience with universal social protection schemes and climate resilience with greater investments in sustainable



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development overall, including in sustainable infrastructure, are key building blocks of a resilient recovery. Such efforts need to be bolstered by international solidarity and universal access to the vaccine so that the world can move to the trajectory of sustainable development.

The HLPF reviews shall take into account the different impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic across all Sustainable Development Goals, consider progress in implementing the 2030 Agenda in its entirety and address the interlinkages between Goals, to promote integrated actions cutting across economic, social and environmental dimensions of sustainable development. It will thus discuss actions that can create co-benefits, address synergies and trade-offs and meet multiple objectives in a coherent manner, leaving no one behind. The review shall also cover the targets of the Sustainable Development Goals with a 2020 timeline.

The pandemic has put a spotlight on the poor and most vulnerable, including women, older people, young people, children, low-wage earners, informal workers, persons with disabilities, indigenous peoples, people in situations of conflict, refugees and migrants. Countries need to enhance social protection and access to essential services for the poor and most vulnerable to ensure an inclusive recovery and that no one will be left behind.

Achieving the SDGs will depend on the collective response over the coming 18 months; whether the COVID-19 crisis serves as a much-needed wake-up call that spurs a decade of truly transformative action that delivers for people and planet is still to be seen. Countries in special situations, including LDCs, LLDCs and SIDS, as well as middle-income countries, would require a tailored approach that takes into account their needs and priorities. The 2030 Agenda and its 17 SDGs is still the best available blueprint for a sustainable, inclusive and resilient recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic, and to profoundly improve the lives of all and transform our world for the better.

### **Proposed guiding questions:**

- Where do we stand on the SDGs given the dramatic impacts of COVID-19?
- What can we learn from the different country experiences in responding to the COVID-19 pandemic?
- What mix of policies have been more effective in addressing COVID-19's impacts while putting countries back on track to realize the SDGs?
- What are immediate actions that countries should consider addressing the socio-economic impact of the pandemic on the most vulnerable?
- What should be done to ensure the availability of timely and reliable data and improve the resilience of the statistics offices/operations to make informed decisions for recovering from COVID-19 and achieving the SDGs?

### **Chair:**

- **H.E. Mr Munir Akram**, President of Economic and Social Council

### **Keynote address**

### **Presentation:**



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- **Mr. Liu Zhenmin**, Under-Secretary-General of Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations, presentation of the report of the Secretary-General on the progress towards SDGs and measures to realize the SDGs at the time of COVID-19 pandemic

Followed by a townhall style meeting

**Tuesday, 6 July 2021, 12:00 PM-1:00 PM**

### **Ensuring that no one is left behind**

How do we protect the poorest and most vulnerable from the crisis  
and empower them to realize the SDGs?

When Member States adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, they pledged that no one would be left behind, and that they would endeavour to reach the furthest behind first. They committed themselves to achieving sustainable development for all nations and peoples and for all segments of society.

While progress was made in economic and social development over the past decades, it has been uneven among countries and among various social groups. Poverty is still ravishing the lives of over 1 billion people, a number that has increased with the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic. The impact of the pandemic has laid bare lack of social protection and access to healthcare services, discrimination and human rights neglects. It also increased global inequalities between people and countries based on their level of access to good health and sanitation services, and increasingly importantly, quick and safe vaccinations.

The pandemic has exposed and worsened high levels of vulnerability, and unprecedentedly high demand for social protection measures. At the same time, the pandemic has also added urgency to close the digital gaps. The digital divide has given a new face to inequality, as digital access has become one of the critical determinants of livelihoods, well-being and recovery with digital technologies increasingly used for public service delivery, facilitating of work-family balance and supporting e-learning.

This session will examine these new dimensions of the global commitment to ensuring that no one is left behind, and the challenges towards protecting and empowering vulnerable groups towards increased resilience and recovery in the years ahead. From a gender-based perspective, the discussions will highlight how the well-being of families and various social groups, including older persons, young people, migrants, and those facing digital exclusion, has changed. It will also seek ways to restore comprehensive policies and strategies towards inclusion and reverting back to the vision of the 2030 Agenda.

#### **Proposed guiding questions:**

- What are the lessons from the pandemic in adjusting social and economic policies to cope with vulnerability and disadvantage and its diverse effects on families and various groups in society?



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- How can we progress to the SDGs be resumed quickly and sustainably for the furthest behind, building back from addressing the setback in poverty, unemployment and exclusion caused by the pandemic?
- What lessons can be learned from the current crisis to formulate more inclusive economic and social policies for the post-pandemic world, while still facing the environmental challenges and climate change?
- How can we monitor recently enacted social protection and digital inclusion measures for their effectiveness and their ability to reach the furthest behind?

### Chair:

- President or Vice President of ECOSOC

Interactive panel discussion

**Tuesday, 6 July 2021, 3:00 PM-5:00 PM**

### **Building resilience against future shocks through structural changes and investment in sustainable infrastructure**

How can we restructure our social and economic systems and develop the sustainable infrastructure we need (transport, water and sanitation, energy, ICT, urban systems, and social infrastructure) to build resilience and achieve the SDGs?

The COVID-19 pandemic challenges our society's resilience. The sheer magnitude of the crisis was, in most cases, beyond our society's capacity to cope. Along with tragic losses of human life, the economic and social impacts of the pandemic could last for an extended period, decades in some countries. Since the onset of the pandemic, we have witnessed various policy and societal responses to the crisis and seen multiple dimensions of the resilience of people and societies. It is crucial to deepen the discussions about how we can restructure our social and economic systems to build resilience against future shocks and protect people, including the furthest behind. An important dimension of this conversation is how to mobilize investment in infrastructure, which is among the most effective device to support the transformations we need. The scope of infrastructure investment needs to be drastically increased as part of the global recovery.

The salient fact is that many developing countries lack hard infrastructure in transport, water and sanitation, energy, ICT, roads and urban systems, which need urgent attention in the global recovery strategy. Investment in soft, social infrastructure must also be increased for resilience building. The vast majority of developing countries do not have the public resources to finance infrastructure investments, nor the capacity to borrow at the low interest rates available to the advanced economies. They will have to find ways to mobilize expanded external financing, including private finance. The international community's resolve for achieving the SDGs requires new efforts and a review of mechanisms to mobilize resources for supporting investment in infrastructure, including social infrastructure, in developing countries.



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### Proposed guiding questions:

- How can we restructure our social and economic systems to build resilience against future shock?
- What areas of infrastructure investment should be prioritised in the context of the global recovery drive?
- What are the crucial policy measures for mobilizing resources for sustainable infrastructure?
- In what areas are international cooperation and coordination needed the most to build resilience through infrastructure investment and to match resources and needs?
- What kind of reforms, systems and transformations are needed to mobilize resources for sustainable infrastructure investment in developing countries?

### Chair:

- President or Vice President of ECOSOC

Interactive panel discussion

## Wednesday, 7 July 2021

Wednesday, 7 July 2021, 9:00 AM - 12:15 PM

### SDGs in focus:

How do we get on track to end poverty and hunger, and transform towards inclusive and sustainable economies?  
(SDGs 1, 2, 8, 17 and interlinkages among those goals and with other SDGs)

*(Meeting break 11:00 AM - 11:15 AM)*

Poverty and hunger are on the rise after years of decline, a trend exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic, and past progress in many areas of eliminating poverty in all its dimensions is facing headwinds. As many as 132 million additional people went hungry in 2020 because of the COVID-19 crisis, and it is projected that as many as 163 million additional people could be pushed into extreme poverty through 2021. The livelihoods of people living in poverty and informal workers are at risk without social protection to cope in many countries, with women particularly impacted. At the same time shrinking fiscal space in many countries further restricts options.

In the recovery from COVID-19 and its negative impacts, economic growth is necessary to lift people out of poverty, yet it needs to be much more inclusive. The critical role of social protection needs to be reinforced, while also addressing the inequalities that have been exacerbated by the pandemic including gender inequality. The loss of jobs must be urgently addressed. Additional actions are needed to transform economies and food systems to deliver on the interlinked SDGs in an integrated manner especially in growing sectors, such as green jobs and service provision, and with investments



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in climate-friendly agriculture and low-carbon infrastructures as well as in ICT. Scaling up successful initiatives and investments for systemic transformations is needed to eradicate poverty and hunger advancing good health while building resilience for the future. This session will examine the challenges and opportunities for ending poverty and hunger and transforming towards inclusive and sustainable economies.

### Proposed guiding questions:

- What have been the key trends regarding SDGs 1, 2 and 8, and relations with SDG 17?
- How can increasing poverty and hunger be tackled while transforming economies and food systems towards increased resilience and lowered climate/environmental impacts?
- How can economic recoveries be shaped to ensure more inclusive and sustainable patterns of growth that generate decent jobs, ensure equal access to basic services and social protection, and support carbon-neutrality and a better balance with nature?
- How can food systems be transformed to deliver better nutrition for all, while improving their balance with nature?
- What are the opportunities to be realized (and pitfalls to be avoided) in the immediate and medium terms towards these ends? What kind of international cooperation is needed to provide the necessary support?
- What are ways to combat poverty and hunger and respond to the COVID-19 crisis and its impacts that enable more inclusive, equitable, resilient and sustainable development?
- How can policies in those areas support gender equality?

### Chair:

- President or Vice President of ECOSOC

Interactive panel discussion

**Wednesday, 7 July 2021, 12:15 PM -1:15 PM**

### **Looking at the 2020 targets: implementation and review**

How are we doing on the 2020 targets? How can we keep reviewing them while keeping track of ongoing intergovernmental processes to keep the level of ambition of those targets?

(Targets 2.5, 3.6, 6.6, 8.6, 8.b, 9.c, 12.4, 13.a, 12.4, 14.2, 14.4, 14.5, 14.6, 15.1 and 17.118.6. 8.b, 9.c, 15.2, 15.5, 15.8, 15.9 and 17.8 and their interrelations including with other goals)

When the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development was negotiated, Member States decided that certain targets within the SDGs should be achieved with an accelerated timeline, including those agreed in other intergovernmental processes such as the Convention on Biodiversity (CBD), the Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management (SAICM), the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), and others. These “shared” targets have a completion date of 2020 in those parallel processes, and by carrying over this deadline to the SDGs, Member States effectively raised the ambition of the 2030 Agenda as a whole.



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There are 21 targets meant to mature in 2020 in the areas of food security, health, education, water, employment, infrastructure, cities, sustainable consumption and production, climate, oceans, terrestrial ecosystems and partnerships. None of these targets were achieved in 2020.

The Secretary-General's SDG progress report of this year shows that there has been some progress in some of these targets, but nowhere is the progress adequate. There has been, for instance, a decline in road traffic injuries (though this is still the leading cause of death globally for young people); an increase of ODA for scholarships; an increase in the number of countries that have developed youth employment strategies and national urban policies; an increase in climate-specific financial support; a doubling of key biodiversity, marine, freshwater and terrestrial areas from 2000 to 2020; a slowing-down of deforestation; and progress in instruments and policies to combat illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing and to address invasive alien species. On the other hand, many local livestock breeds are deemed at risk of extinction, the world's river basins and wetlands are under increased threat, youth unemployment has increased significantly, mobile-broadband networks and e-waste recycling are progressing much too slowly, and species extinction risk has worsened by about 10 per cent over the last three decades. In addition, bilateral investment treaties with LDCs have slowed in 2020, and after an initial increase in support to high-quality, timely and reliable data especially in LDCs, this is now faltering due to the pandemic.

So, though 2020 has passed for these targets, now is the time to intensify efforts to achieve them, keeping in mind that many of them, especially those related to biodiversity, are being reviewed and likely made more ambitious through their own parallel processes. This session will thus provide the opportunity to discuss how to accelerate achievement of these targets and how best to reflect the increased ambition coming from related intergovernmental processes while maintaining the integrity of the 2030 Agenda.

### **Proposed guiding questions:**

- What would be the best ways to accelerate achievement of the 2020 targets?
- What would be the best way to update the targets?
- What role should the General Assembly and the HLPF play in keeping the ambition of the 2020 targets?

### **Chair:**

- President or Vice President of ECOSOC

Interactive panel discussion

**Wednesday, 7 July 2021, 3:00 PM - 5:00 PM**

### **SDGs in focus**

How do we revamp and transform consumption and production  
and address and mitigate climate change?

(SDGs 12, 13, 17 and interlinkages among these goals and with other SDGs)





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Climate change, biodiversity loss, and pollution and waste are three interlinked emergencies driven by human activities. Despite a temporary reprieve due to the pandemic, preliminary data shows that greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions continued to grow in 2020, and that 2015-2020 was the warmest six-year period on record. Domestic material consumption per capita and total global material footprint as well as food waste and e-waste all continue to rise around the world. Addressing these crises will require major structural transformations in the way people live, work, produce and consume.

Experts estimate that global emissions must fall by 45% from 2010 levels by 2030 in order to limit global warming to 1.50C. At the same time, countries must take aggressive action to reduce resource use per unit of GDP, enhance the sustainable use of natural resources, and address all forms of pollution and waste in order to achieve the sustainable consumption and production (SCP) targets contained in SDG 12. This is also necessary to bend the development curve toward a version of society where people live in a more balanced and harmonious relationship with nature. Such efforts must include proactively managing novel pollutants, and resource demands associated with new products and materials.

The necessary transformations are deep and far-reaching, and they need to take place on an accelerated timeline. Many of these transformations are technically feasible but difficult to implement if left entirely to the market. The pandemic recovery period may provide an unprecedented opportunity to overcome inertia if governments respond with the requisite political will and direct recovery investments toward renewable energy, sustainable infrastructure, nature-based solutions, and green jobs, as well as international cooperation for a truly global impact. SDGs 12 and 13 can be achieved only with a strengthened global partnership (SDG 17), the private sector's genuine commitment to shift to sustainable production practices, and changes in consumption patterns. The current session will address progress towards SDGs 12 and 13 and the interlinkages with other SDGs notably SDG 17. It will also discuss concrete policies and actions needed to make meaningful progress in sustainable consumption and production and in combatting climate change. It will explore the vital and interrelated roles of governments, business, communities, civil society and the multilateral system.

### **Proposed guiding questions:**

- What have been the trends on SDG 12 and 13?
- What broad-based economic and social transformations are needed to make consumption and production systems more sustainable, to arrest climate change, reduce waste, and restore the relationship between human society and nature?
- How can transformations towards carbon neutrality also promote sustainable consumption and production, including with new materials and products?
- How can these transformations also promote gender equality and ensure that no one is left behind?
- What are the opportunities to be realized (and pitfalls to be avoided) in the immediate and medium terms towards these ends? How can international cooperation support?

### **Chair:**

- President of Vice President of ECOSOC

Interactive panel discussion



## HIGH-LEVEL POLITICAL FORUM ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

**Thursday, 8 July 2021**

**Thursday, 8 July 2021, 9:00 AM - 12:15 PM**

### **SDGs in focus:**

How do we get on track for building more peaceful, equal and inclusive societies (SDGs 3, 10, 16, 17 and interlinkages among those goals and with other SDGs)

*(Meeting break 11:00 AM - 11:15 AM)*

The continuation of the COVID-19 pandemic risks increasing inequality both within and among countries along many dimensions. Income inequalities within countries have widened, with lower income households bearing a disproportionate burden of the pandemic in terms of lost jobs or greater exposure to the virus. Across countries, differences in recovery trajectories – due to unequal fiscal resources and also unequal access to COVID-19 vaccinations – threaten to further widen gaps in per capita incomes between developed and most developing economies.

Forms of inequality that pre-date COVID-19, including unequal care burdens at home and the digital divide, now stand to set women, school aged children and rural communities back decades. Even past progress in many areas of health and well-being including in maternal mortality and childhood vaccinations stand to be reversed. All of these heighten social tensions and polarization and weaken social cohesion. At the same time, in many cases, institutions intended to promote more peaceful, just and inclusive societies have fallen short, including during COVID-19 related lockdowns, increasing risks of unrest, conflict and violence. The stresses being experienced could also however motivate new partnerships and initiatives to reduce inequalities, advance well-being and promote justice and inclusive, effective and accountable institutions. This session will explore the situation and interlinkages among SDGs 3, 10, 16 and 17 and identify ways forward toward more peaceful, equal and inclusive societies.

### **Proposed guiding questions:**

- What is the situation regarding SDGs 3, 10, 16 and their relation with SDG 17?
- What has the pandemic revealed about how deep-seated inequalities determine lifetime opportunities and outcomes including in good health and well-being?
- Has the pandemic introduced new forms of inequality within and across countries that now also need to be addressed?
- How can countries make effective and enduring changes towards more equitable, inclusive and just societies?
- What are the opportunities to be realized (and pitfalls to be avoided) in the immediate and medium terms towards these ends? How can international cooperation support?

### **Chair:**

- President or Vice President of ECOSOC



## HIGH-LEVEL POLITICAL FORUM ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Interactive panel discussion

**Thursday, 8 July 2021, 12:15 PM-1:15 PM**

### **Going local**

How can we support local authorities in implementing the SDGs  
and how can we best build on voluntary local reviews?

The SDGs provide an unprecedented opportunity to align global, national and subnational priorities and engage all stakeholders at the local level in efforts towards sustainable development. If current trends continue, by 2050 cities will host approximately 70 per cent of the world's population and produce 85 per cent of global economic output. Urbanization is not only a demographic or spatial phenomenon but a force which, if steered and deployed correctly, can help the world overcome some of its major global challenges. Urban policy decisions can have extraordinarily far-reaching impacts across all the SDGs, including poverty alleviation and reduction of inequalities, climate mitigation and adaptation, promotion of safety and good governance and in ensuring access to energy, transportation, waste management, food supply, water and sanitation, education, health care, technology infrastructure including broadband and online public services, and others, not just for urban populations but also for the surrounding peri-urban and rural areas.

In the Political Declaration adopted at the 2019 SDG Summit, Member States reaffirmed the critical role of cities, local authorities and communities in implementing and realizing the SDGs and committed to empowering and supporting them in pursuing the 2030 Agenda. An increasing number of national governments are already supporting the localization of the SDGs in cities and regions, both through technical co-operation and financial support, but more support is needed. The ongoing COVID-19 pandemic has only added unprecedented challenges for cities, including pressure on their health care, education and safety systems, and disproportionately affected the most vulnerable groups of the society.

Local and regional governments are increasingly engaging in subnational reviews of SDG implementation, including by preparing Voluntary Local Reviews (VLR). These reviews, modelled after the Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs), have proven useful for local governments to foster SDG localization and to demonstrate their capacity and commitment towards the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Local governments in all regions of the world have already prepared such reviews with many more currently going through the process, resulting in tangible benefits to SDG implementation at large. Several Voluntary National Review countries have also integrated findings from VLRs in their national level reviews.

#### **Proposed guiding questions:**

- What are some of the main challenges and bottlenecks for effective SDG localization? What type of capacity building and support is required to ensure that cities, local authorities and communities are empowered and equipped to implement the SDGs?



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- How can the Voluntary Local Reviews benefit SDG implementation at large? How can they be used as an effective tool for multilevel governance and dialogue between different levels of government?
- In what ways can the Voluntary Local Reviews be used to ensure a better recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic locally, nationally and globally?
- How could the Voluntary Local Reviews feed into the Voluntary National Reviews? What modalities have worked for fostering effective dialogue between these two levels of reviews?
- What arrangements are needed to ensure that findings and good practices from the local level are disseminated and utilized? What role can the United Nations, including the Regional Commissions, play in this?

### Chair:

- President or Vice President of ECOSOC

Interactive panel discussion

**Thursday, 8 July 2021, 3:00 PM - 5:00 PM**

### **Restoring the conditions for SDG progress in African countries, Least Developed Countries and Landlocked Developing Countries**

While some progress has been made toward the SDGs in African countries, Least Developed Countries (LDCs) and Landlocked Developing Countries (LLDCs), even before the COVID-19 pandemic many countries were not on track to achieve the SDGs, and in some cases were regressing. The ongoing pandemic has exposed vulnerabilities and structural inequalities, adversely impacting human health, economies, and education. Debt levels are rising. Resilience is threatened by inequality and unemployment across populations. Social inequalities are widening, and disproportionately affecting women and girls. The pandemic has paralyzed key sectors including tourism, and the devastating effects of climate change are hindering recovery efforts.

LDCs and LLDCs are characterized by undiversified economies, weak public health services, low productive capacities, inadequate digital connectivity, and limited resources to mitigate the spread and impact of COVID-19. Of the 46 countries classified as LDCs, 33 of these are in Africa; half of the 32 LLDC countries are also located in this region.

While cases of COVID-19 had previously remained low in many of these countries, they are currently on the rise in Africa and in some LLDCs. Although the vaccine is starting to be distributed in many countries, rollout has been very slow. A minuscule proportion of vaccinations have been made in low income countries and a number of LDCs have not yet been able to begin vaccinating at all.

Both LDCs and LLDCs are severely affected by the global recession as a result of the pandemic, and many are in need of debt relief. Limited export diversification has heightened the vulnerability of LDCs to the impact of the pandemic on global trade. LLDCs have been impacted by cross-border restrictions



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and border closures, given their lack of direct access to seaports and dependency on transit transport to access international markets. Urgent and effective debt relief is needed, beyond debt servicing suspension. Bridging the digital divide is also more important than ever, to ensure a sustainable recovery and restore conditions for progress.

Preparations are currently underway in advance of the Fifth United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries (LDC5), which will convene from 23 to 27 January 2022 in Doha, Qatar, and is expected to adopt a new ambitious 10-year programme of action for the LDCs.

This session will address the challenges and opportunities common to these groups of countries amidst the pandemic and discuss the conditions necessary to overcome the socio-economic impacts of COVID-19 and embark on a track to realize the SDGs.

### Proposed guiding questions:

- How can COVID-19 stimulus packages be designed and directed at supporting a sustainable and resilient recovery in Africa, and in LDC and LLDCs outside the region? How can they be bolstered by the international community?
- How could longer-term economic and fiscal policies and measures mitigate the social and economic effects of the pandemic, without increasing debt levels?
- What is being done to prioritize the needs of women, children, refugees, displaced persons, and other vulnerable populations? How are women and youth being engaged in sustainable recovery efforts?
- Where can we point to examples of innovative partnerships in critical sectors such as trade, investment, technology capacity building, food security, grants and concessional financing?
- What role can the UN play in ensuring a coordinated and comprehensive response to the ongoing crisis? How can we ensure access to the vaccine in these countries?
- What critical new commitments should be included in the outcome of LDC 5?

### Chair:

- President or Vice President of Economic and Social Council

Interactive panel discussion

**Friday, 9 July 2021**

**Friday, 9 July 2021, 9:00 AM-11:00 AM**

**Coming together to help Small Island Developing States to get on a path to realize the SDGs**

*(Meeting break 11:00 AM - 11:15 AM)*



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The challenges and vulnerabilities of Small Island Development States (SIDS) have been exacerbated by the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. This has highlighted the urgent need for decisive actions for sustainable and climate resilient recovery. Only a handful of bilateral and multilateral institutions have supported SIDS in mitigating the impact of the pandemic, with only 4% of available COVID-19 funding for developing countries being spent on SIDS. The economic fall-out suffered globally and by these countries in particular has shown the urgent need to reset the agenda so that it better reflects the challenges faced by SIDS and better enables the international community to find viable solutions to address these challenges. The persistent use of historical measures of GDP per capita for accessing concessional funding captures neither who is most affected, nor who is least able to respond to the pandemic. New consensus needs to be built about what constitutes vulnerability, in order to encompass the multiplicity of inter-linking challenges with which every state now has to deal, so that eligibility for resources such as concessional finance is no longer solely dependent on narrow measures such as GDP per capita.

There has actually been growing acceptance of the need for donors and multilateral organisations to consider factors other than GDP when addressing the vulnerabilities of developing countries and in particular SIDS. Recent experiences of consequences arising from the COVID-19 pandemic have raised awareness and deepened appreciation of the pressing urgency for action to be taken. In this regard the latest United Nations General Assembly mandate, in its resolution 75/215, on the potential development, use, finalization and coordination of work within the UN system on a multidimensional vulnerability index (MVI) of SIDS is an important step in this direction

This session will focus on the theme: A Multidimensional Vulnerability Measure for SIDS. It will be in a format of a Fireside Chat among Heads of Government and Institutions.

### **Proposed guiding questions:**

- What type of resources are currently available to SIDS to enable them to recover from the COVID pandemic? Can all SIDS benefit from these resources?
- What principles or key elements should underpin the development of a multidimensional vulnerability measure for SIDS?
- What kinds of vulnerabilities should be reflected in a framework? Should resilience also be reflected?
- What can a multi-dimensional measure be used for?
- How can a multidimensional vulnerability index be used by international financial institutions and the UN system?

### **Chair:**

- President or Vice President of ECOSOC

Fireside chat



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Friday, 9 July 2021, 11:15 AM - 1:15 PM

### **Mobilizing science, technology and innovation and strengthening the science-policy-society interface**

How do we ensure that science and technology support the realization of the SDGs for all and how do we bridge the digital divide? This session will include a dialogue with scientists preparing the Global Sustainable Development Report-GSDR

One of the key functions entrusted to the HLPF by Rio+20 and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is to strengthen the science-policy interface, including through the Global Sustainable Development Report and the Technology Facilitation Mechanism. Progress in science, technology, and innovation (STI) continues to accelerate, promising significant benefits but also risks to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development as they impact the economy, society and environment.

Despite the potential for STI in helping to realise the 2030 Agenda, challenges abound. Alignment between STI and SDGs remains weak. STI can reproduce and even amplify social and economic inequalities due to challenges in access and design.

Governments, in cooperation with relevant stakeholders, need to accelerate efforts to close the digital divide and support the digital inclusion of disadvantaged and marginalized groups and communities, by addressing the various factors behind the divide including, access to ICT infrastructure, affordability of the Internet and ICT device, digital and literacy skills, and awareness / relevance of online content.

Advances in STI should be harnessed to enhance equal opportunities and access to basic services, so that no one is left behind. Governments and the international community have a central role to play in providing directionality to innovation activities to ensure that STI is driven by considerations of inclusiveness and sustainability.

The COVID-19 pandemic has sparked innovations and new forms of collaboration. STI is playing an important role in understanding, responding to, and recovering from the COVID-19 pandemic. The crisis has been a wake-up call for a better science-policy-society interface, for more effective international technology cooperation, and for building public trust in science related to all areas of sustainable development.

The purpose of the session is to further advance progress on the implementation of the Technology Facilitation Mechanism under the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and other related UN processes. It will build on the outcome of the 6th Multi-stakeholder Forum on Science, Technology, and Innovation for the Sustainable Development Goals (4-5 May 2021) and consider the recommendations contained in the co-chairs' Summary of the Forum.

The session will discuss the main challenges and opportunities for mobilizing science, technology, and innovation and strengthening the science-policy-society interface. Specific attention will be given to exploring the existing mechanisms and potential innovations in developing and deploying STI for responding to the COVID-19 pandemic and addressing emerging challenges and bridging the digital divide. Views, suggestions, and current achievements are expected to be shared by practitioners, policymakers, and experts based on their most recent experiences and research.





## HIGH-LEVEL POLITICAL FORUM ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

### Proposed guiding questions:

- What are the most promising technology solutions, innovations, and transformative technology pathways towards achieving the SDGs?
- What are the challenges and opportunities faced in developing and deploying STI for emerging challenges such as the COVID-19 pandemic?
- How can governments and other stakeholders work together to address the various causes of the digital divide (access, affordability, skills, relevance)?
- How can we mobilize science, technology, and innovation to improve the lives of those furthest behind and reduce inequalities, without perpetuating the digital divide, especially during rapid technological change?
- How can we strengthen international cooperation on science, technology, and innovation to better deal with sustainability challenges?

The President of the Economic and Social Council has transmitted to HLPF, the Co-Chairs' summary of the STI Forum. The Co-Chairs of the Forum will begin the session by presenting this Summary. The session will follow by panel presentations and then followed by interactive discussion with the participants.

### Chair:

- President or Vice President of ECOSOC

Interactive panel discussion

**Friday, 9 July 2021, 3:00 PM - 5:00 PM**

### **Vision and priorities of civil society, the private sector and other major groups and stakeholders: realizing the SDGs during the COVID-19 recovery**

The 2030 Agenda and the United Nations General Assembly established ambitious modalities for the participation of Major Groups and other Stakeholders (MGoS) in the HLPF (*paragraph 89 of the 2030 Agenda and paragraphs 14 and 15 of General Assembly Resolution 67/290*). MGoS are crucial to the successful implementation, follow-up, and review of the 2030 Agenda. In preparation for the 2021 HLPF, they contributed to review processes at all levels, including at the regional forums on sustainable development and through national review mechanisms. This session, organised in collaboration with the HLPF Coordination Mechanism of the MGoS, offers civil society, the private sector and other major groups and stakeholders an opportunity highlight their vision and priorities in realizing the SDGs during the COVID-19 recovery

### Chair:

- President or Vice President of ECOSOC





## HIGH-LEVEL POLITICAL FORUM ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Interactive discussion

**Monday, 12 July 2021**

**Monday, 12 July 2021, 9:00 AM - 11:30 AM**

### **Investing in the SDGs**

How can public and private financing be scaled up to unlock catalytic investments for the achievement of the 2030 Agenda

Lack of fiscal space and the risk of sovereign debt distress have come into sharp focus as key stumbling blocks to achieving the 2030 Agenda as countries seek to invest in recovery, climate action and the SDGs while maintaining sustainable debt levels. The dedicated session on financing will be geared to advance the dialogue on how to achieve these policy objectives against the backdrop of the COVID-19 recovery and global efforts to get back on track in achieving the SDGs.

The session will explore concrete policy recommendations that can catalyse investments into the SDGs within the context of pressing debt sustainability challenges faced by developing countries across the globe.

#### **Proposed guiding questions:**

- What innovative financing and debt instruments can unlock investment in the SDGs in the context of limited fiscal space, including in countries with special situations?
- What steps in addition to the G20 Debt Service Suspension Initiative and Common Framework are needed to improve debt sustainability and free up resources for investments in the SDGs?
- What measures can strengthen global debt sustainability in the long term, including changes to the international debt architecture?
- What role can the private sector play to channel investments towards the investment in the SDGs and contribute to closing the financing gap in developing countries?

#### **Chair:**

- President or Vice President of ECOSOC

Interactive panel discussion



## HIGH-LEVEL POLITICAL FORUM ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

**Monday, 12 July 2021, 11:30 AM - 1:00 PM**

### **Voluntary National Reviews**

As part of its follow-up and review architecture, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development encourages Member States to “conduct regular and inclusive reviews of progress at the national and subnational levels, which are country led and country driven” (paragraph 79). These national reviews are expected to serve as a basis for the regular reviews by the HLPF, meeting under the auspices of ECOSOC.

As stipulated in paragraph 84 of the 2030 Agenda, regular reviews by the HLPF are to be voluntary, state-led, undertaken by both developed and developing countries, and involve multiple stakeholders. The voluntary national reviews (VNRs) aim to facilitate the sharing of experiences, including successes, challenges and lessons learned, with a view to accelerating the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. The VNRs also seek to strengthen policies and institutions and to mobilize multi-stakeholder support and partnerships for the implementation of the SDGs.

44 countries will conduct VNRs at the 2021 HLPF, including 9 first timers, 25 second timers, and 10 third timers.

**Chair:** President or Vice President of ECOSOC

**Remarks:**

- **Ms. Amina J. Mohammed**, Deputy Secretary-General of the United Nations on key messages from the 2021 Voluntary National Reviews (tbc)

**Third timers and One second timer**

**Panel:** Azerbaijan, Czech Republic, Egypt, Qatar

**Monday, 12 July 2021, 3:00 PM - 5:00 PM**

### **Voluntary National Reviews**

**Chair:** President or Vice President of ECOSOC

**Third timers and One second timer**

**Panel:** Colombia, Niger, Uruguay

**Panel:** Cabo Verde, Guatemala, Mexico



***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***

**Tuesday, 13 July 2021**

Tuesday, 13 July 2021, 9:00 AM - 10:30 AM

**Opening of the High-level Segment of ECOSOC / Ministerial Segment of HLPF**

**Chair:**

- **H.E. Mr. Munir Akram**, President of Economic and Social Council

**Opening remarks:**

- **H.E. Mr. Munir Akram**, President of Economic and Social Council
- **Mr. António Guterres**, Secretary-General of the United Nations
- **H.E. Mr. Volkan Bozkir**, President of the General Assembly

**Keynote address**

**Youth representatives** (messages on behalf of youth)

Tuesday, 13 July 2021, 10:30 AM-1:15 PM

**HLPF**

**Voluntary National Reviews**

*(Meeting break 11:00 AM - 11:15 AM)*

**Chair:** President or Vice President of ECOSOC

**First timers**

**Individual presentations:** Angola, Antigua and Barbuda, Cuba, Myanmar, San Marino



**Tuesday, 13 July 2021, 3:00 PM-3:15 PM**

**HLPF**

**Keynote by the President of UN Environment Assembly**

The UN Environment Assembly contributes to the effective implementation and full integration of the environmental dimension of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, acknowledging that a healthy environment is an essential requirement and key enabler for sustainable development. In his allocution, the President of the UN Environment Assembly, H.E. Mr. Sveinung Rotevatn, Minister of Environment and Climate of Norway, will convey the main messages of the UN Environment Assembly and present the contributions of the Assembly to the debates of the HLPF.

The first session of UNEA-5 (UNEA-5.1) was held online on 22-23 February 2021. A resumed in-person session of UNEA-5 will be held on 28 February – 2 March 2022 (UNEA-5.2)

**Chair:**

- **H.E. Mr. Munir Akram**, President of Economic and Social Council

**Keynote speaker:**

- **H.E. Mr. Sveinung Rotevatn**, President of the fifth session of the United Nations Environment Assembly, Minister of Environment and Climate of Norway

**Tuesday, 13 July 2021, 3:15 PM-4:45 PM**

**HLPF**

**Voluntary National Reviews**

**Chair:** President or Vice President of ECOSOC

**First timers**

**Individual presentations:** Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Marshall Islands, Nicaragua



## Wednesday, 14 July 2021

Wednesday, 14 July 2021, 9:00 AM-10:30 AM

### HLPF

#### Messages from the regions

The 2030 Agenda stressed the importance of the regional and sub-regional dimensions in the follow-up and review of the Agenda. Since the creation of the HLPF, regional forums on sustainable development have been organized by the United Nations regional commissions to contribute to the forum's preparations. Their importance was recognized in the Political Declaration of the SDG Summit in September 2019.

The session will discuss the findings and recommendations from the regional forums on sustainable development. The meeting will start with presentations by the Ministerial Chairs of the Regional Forums on Sustainable Development followed by interactive discussion with participants.

#### **Chair:**

- President or Vice President of ECOSOC

Presentations and interactive discussion

Wednesday, 14 July 2021, 10:30 AM-1:15 PM

### HLPF

#### Voluntary National Reviews

*(Meeting break 11:00 AM - 11:15 AM)*

**Chair:** President or Vice President of ECOSOC

#### Second timers

**Panel:** China, Afghanistan, Denmark

**Panel:** Thailand, Chad, Norway, Saudi Arabia



**Wednesday, 14 July 2021, 3:00 PM-5:00 PM**

**HLPF**

**Voluntary National Reviews**

**Chair:** President or Vice President of ECOSOC

*Second timers and one third timer and one first timer*

**Panel:** Bahamas, Tunisia

**Panel:** Dominican Republic, Sierra Leone

**Individual presentation:** Bolivia

**Thursday, 15 July 2021**

**Thursday, 15 July 2021, 9:00 AM-1:15 PM**

**HLPF**

**Voluntary National Reviews**

*(Meeting break 11:00 AM - 11:15 AM)*

**Chair:** President or Vice President of ECOSOC (9:00 AM-11:00 AM)

*Second timers and one third timer*

**Panel:** Japan, Germany, Lao PDR, Malaysia

**Panel:** Cyprus, Indonesia, Iraq, Madagascar

**Panel:** Bhutan, Namibia, Spain, Zimbabwe



**Thursday, 15 July 2021, 3:00 PM-3:40 PM**

**HLPF**

**Voluntary National Reviews**

**Chair:** President or Vice President of ECOSOC

**Panel:** Paraguay, Sweden

**Thursday, 15 July 2021, 3:40 PM-5:00 PM**

**Closing of the HLPF**

**Chair:** H.E. Mr. Munir Akram, President of Economic and Social Council

Adoption of the Ministerial Declaration

Closing remarks of **Ms. Amina J. Mohammed**, Deputy Secretary-General of the United Nations (tbc)

Closing remarks of **H.E. Mr. Munir Akram**, President of Economic and Social Council

Conclusion of the HLPF



***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***

**Friday, 16 July 2021**

**High-level Segment of ECOSOC**

*(Continued)*

**Friday, 16 July 2021, 10:00 AM -10:30 PM**

**Introduction of SG reports on the theme  
of HLPF and ECOSOC, and on long term impact of current trends on SDGs  
Report of the Committee on Development Policy**

**Chair:**

- **H.E. Mr. Munir Akram**, President of Economic and Social Council

**Presentations:**

- **Mr. Liu Zhenmin**, Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations, introduction of the Secretary-General's reports on the theme of HLPF and ECOSOC 2021 and on long-term future trends and scenarios – impacts in the economic, social and environmental areas on the realization of the SDGs
- **Mr. José Antonio Ocampo**, Chair of the Committee on Development Policy (CDP), introduction of the CDP report

**Friday, 16 July 2021, 10:30 AM -1:00 PM**

**Strengthening ECOSOC at its 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary for sustainable and resilient  
recovery from the COVID-19 and advancing the 2030 Agenda**

The Economic and Social Council is celebrating its 75th anniversary. As the world is progressing with rebuilding and recovery efforts, 75 years after its creation, ECOSOC's role and mandate are more relevant than ever in advancing the necessary committed global solidarity and cooperation to avoid another catastrophic event with devastating impact. The meeting will provide the space for ECOSOC to elicit from its members and observers some innovative ideas in a number of areas that could contribute to the reflection on how best to improve multilateralism in the area of sustainable development while





celebrating the Council's impact during its 75 years of existence and reflecting on maximizing its use and impact.

The further strengthening of the Council, which is being worked on by the General Assembly, is part of a larger effort to move towards a more inclusive, impactful and networked multilateralism in the area of sustainable development. The discussions will address ways to achieve this objective by introducing new dynamics and new ways of working in ECOSOC and among key UN system entities, intergovernmental and other bodies engaged in the policy dialogue and governance of sustainable development and its economic, social and environmental dimensions.

**Proposed guiding questions:**

- How can ECOSOC advance transformative actions for a more resilient, greener and sustainable recovery from COVID-19 and for long-term sustainable development?
- How can the ECOSOC be better equipped to ensure that it continues to support the peoples of the world in peace, dignity and equality?
- How can ECOSOC's role to mobilize and coordinate the UN system be fully utilized?
- How can we evolve towards the kind of multilateralism that can better respond to existential challenges to the achievement of the 2030 Agenda, such as the current pandemic or the economic and social impact of climate change?
- What mechanisms are needed to make multilateralism more inclusive and more conducive to policy coordination, international solidarity and delivery of global public goods?

**Chair:**

- **Mr. Munir Akram**, President of Economic and Social Council

Fireside chat

**Friday, 16 July 2021, 3:00 PM - 4:30 PM**

**Scenarios and possible medium and long-term trends related to the recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic and the achievement of SDGs**

As decided by the General Assembly, the High-level Segment of ECOSOC shall focus on "future trends and scenarios related to "the Council theme, the long-term impact of current trends, such as contribution of new technologies, in the economic, social and environmental areas on the realization of the SDGs."

The response to the COVID-19 pandemic should not be guided only by emergency concerns. It is important to reflect on how the policy measures being taken today can shape a better future.

While the pandemic has accelerated digitalization, it has also amplified persistent technology divides due to underlying inequalities, excluding billions of people from reaping the benefits of digital technologies



and innovations. Currently, the potential of digital consumer innovations in mobility, food, buildings, and energy services remains largely untapped, and could be readily deployed worldwide to open up more feasible pathways towards the achievement of the SDGs, and ensure that no one is left behind. However, the vast majority of financial stimulus packages in response to the pandemic are not yet focused on longer-term measures and sustainable investments.

This session will present economic, social and environmental strategies that promote a sustainable and resilient recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic and the achievement of the SDGs by 2030. An interactive panel discussion will explore cooperative, near-term actions for transforming service efficiencies; discuss application of new technologies that have potential long-term positive impacts; and highlight scenarios for achieving sustainable development in the long term within the context of the current pandemic.

The discussion will be informed by Secretary-General's reports on this year's theme (E/2021/62) and on long-term future trends and scenarios (E/2021/61).

**Proposed guiding questions:**

- How can national COVID-19 recovery plans incorporate innovations for reducing inequalities and bridging the digital divide over the medium and long-term?
- What strategies are being adopted to ensure that financial stimulus packages are applied toward sustainable solutions for a resilient recovery?
- What are some examples of national legal, policy and institutional measures that can enable better social protection and healthcare systems, as part of sustainable and resilient recovery strategies?
- What are examples of near-term decisions that can be made immediately to ensure long-term positive outcomes in areas of food security, education, energy and transport?
- How can we achieve the best-case scenario whereby mobilization of technologies and other policies allows the world to realize the SDGs by 2030?
- How can women be empowered to contribute to recovery strategies, so that gender perspectives are well represented?

**Chair:**

- **H.E. Mr. Munir Akram**, President of Economic and Social Council

Interactive panel discussion



Friday, 16 July 2021, 4:30 PM -6:00 PM

**Conclusion of the High-level Segment of ECOSOC**

**Chair:**

- **H.E. Mr. Munir Akram**, President of Economic and Social Council

Adoption of the Ministerial Declaration

**Closing remarks:**

- **Mr. Liu Zhenmin**, Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations
- **H.E. Mr. Munir Akram**, President of Economic and Social Council

Conclusion of the High-level Segment of ECOSOC

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