

## **Fostering sustainable and resilient societies in uncertain times**

### **Joint meeting of the Economic and Social Council and the 2<sup>nd</sup> Committee of the 79<sup>th</sup> session of the General Assembly**

**10:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m. (New York Time/EST)**

**15 October 2024**

**UN Headquarters New York, Conference Room 2 (TBC)**

*Organized by UNDRR, UN-Women and DESA*

#### **A. Introduction**

The world continues to grapple with a confluence of crisis, including the lingering effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, increasing conflicts and geopolitical tensions, more frequent and intense disasters, and rapidly accelerating impacts of climate change which are compounded by increasing inequalities, pollution and accelerating biodiversity loss. Women and girls, young people and marginalised populations, continue to bear the brunt of their impacts. Investing in social protection systems, adaptation and resilience can protect countries from immediate and future risks, presenting opportunities for inclusive growth that benefit all segments of society.

By prioritizing resilience, countries can cultivate a more stable environment that attracts sustainable investments and fosters long-term economic growth. Furthermore, investments in early warning systems, disaster risk reduction, preparedness and resilient recovery can be strengthened through a gender-responsive approach to social protection which can further foster prosperity and help individuals and communities to adapt. Properly designed, implemented and financed, social protection systems can maximize their contribution to gender equality and empowerment of women and girls, poverty eradication, crisis resilience, and broader processes of economic and social transformation.

Transformative change is needed to build resilience as the bedrock for sustainable development. Doing so requires a paradigm shift towards viewing public expenditure on prevention and gender-responsive social protection as a compelling case for investment in resilience. As little as US\$ 1 invested in risk reduction and prevention can save up to US\$ 15 in post-disaster recovery, demonstrating a clear return on investment. Similarly, evidence shows that the positive impacts on GDP of each dollar spent on social protection surpass those of total government expenditure. Investments in complementary public services also have important multiplier effects.

Despite important progress, however, this potential remains far from realized. Today, billions of people are still without any access to social protection, with women and girls particularly excluded. Even where women are relatively well covered, benefit levels are often inadequate and the range of provisions is not always attuned to their rights and needs, especially in times of crisis.

## **B. Objective**

In the lead up to the fourth International Conference on Financing for Development and the second World Summit on Social Development to be held in 2025, the joint meeting of the Economic and Social Council and the Second Committee of the 79<sup>th</sup> session of the General Assembly will serve as an opportunity to explore pathways to foster more sustainable, resilient and shock-resistant societies in these uncertain times including through investments in gender-responsive social protection systems as well in early warning systems, disaster risk reduction, preparedness and resilient recovery.

The meeting will draw on The World Survey on the Role of Women in Development, a Secretary-General's report presented every five years to Second Committee. The ninth edition focuses on the theme, "Harnessing social protection for gender equality, resilience and transformation".

## **C. Format and participation**

The Second Committee Chair and the Economic and Social Council President will deliver brief opening remarks. This will be followed by two expert panels, addressing resilience and gender-responsive social protection strategies. The panels will feature experts, government representatives, representatives of UN system entities, and civil society representatives.

After the two panels, the floor will be opened for interventions from Member States, for an interactive dialogue. Once the dialogue concludes, the Chair of the Second Committee and the President of ECOSOC will deliver closing remarks.

## **D. Outcome**

The outcome of the joint meeting will be a joint informal summary by the President of ECOSOC and Chair of the Second Committee highlighting the key messages, ideas, and innovative policies emanating from the discussions.

## **E. Guiding questions**

- How can countries advance towards gender-responsive social protection systems?
- What is the role of gender-responsive social protection in enhancing resilience, poverty eradication, and economic transformation?
- What are the key elements of resilient investment strategies?
- What governance structures and policy frameworks are most effective in enabling multi-sectoral and multi-stakeholder efforts to promote resilience and sustainable development?
- What innovative financing mechanisms and investment strategies can be leveraged to support resilience-building and promote sustainable growth, particularly in high-risk and vulnerable areas?
- What role do early warning systems and strategic foresight play in boosting resilience, and how can they be financed effectively?