



Management Segment

New York, 6 - 7 June 2019

Highlights from the reports of ECOSOC Subsidiary Bodies

General Assembly resolution 72/305 on the review of the implementation of GA resolution 68/1 on the strengthening of the Economic and Social Council said that ECOSOC should: (i) bring together the key messages from the ECOSOC subsidiary bodies and the UN system on the main theme; (ii) ensure that the subsidiary bodies produce technical and expert analysis, assessments and policy recommendations and build their recommendations on a solid evidence-based review of progress on the 2030 Agenda and of the outcomes of conferences and summits in their respective area; and (iii) ensure that outcomes are effective and action-oriented and result in increased levels of cooperation.

The aim of this note is to provide an overview of highlights from the ECOSOC subsidiary bodies, which will be presenting their reports during the Management Segment on 6-7 June 2019. These subsidiary bodies include: Commission on the Status of Women, Commission for Social Development, Statistical Commission, Committee for Development Policy, and Committee of Experts on Global Geospatial Information Management.

Commission on the Status of Women

- In its report on the sixty-third session (23 March 2018 and 11-22 March 2019), the Commission on the Status of Women recommended one draft decision for adoption by the Council and one decision to be brought to the attention of the Council. The Commission adopted agreed conclusions, which were transmitted to the Council as an input to the work of the Council. The Commission also decided to take note of the report of its Working Group on Communications on the Status of Women and to include it in the present report in its entirety.
- The Commission considered as its priority theme “Social protection systems, access to public services and sustainable infrastructure for gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls”. It also considered as its review theme “Women’s empowerment and the link to sustainable development”, evaluating progress in the implementation of the agreed conclusions of its sixtieth session. The Commission also discussed the focus area “Women and girls of African descent”.
- The Commission adopted agreed conclusions on the priority theme, including to reaffirm existing commitments, set out areas and issues requiring attention in conjunction with the priority theme and a series of actions to be taken by Governments and other stakeholders to:
 - a) Strengthen normative, legal and policy frameworks;
 - b) Strengthen women’s and girls’ access to social protection;
 - c) Strengthen access to public services for women and girls;
 - d) Make infrastructure work for women and girls;
 - e) Mobilize resources, strengthen women’s participation and improve evidence.
- The Commission recognized its primary role in the follow-up to the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and called upon the United Nations system entities, relevant international financial institutions and multi-stakeholder platforms, and the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women) to support efforts to achieve gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls.
- The work of the Commission on the priority theme and its agreed conclusions constitute an input to the work of the Economic and Social Council and the high-level political forum on sustainable development.



Commission for Social Development

- In its report on the fifty-seventh session (7 February 2018 and 11-21 February 2019), the Commission for Social Development recommended three draft resolutions and one decision for adoption by the Council and one draft resolution and one decision to be brought to the attention of the Council. The Commission also recommended one decision calling for action by the Council.
- The Commission considered the priority theme of “Addressing inequalities and challenges to social inclusion through fiscal, wage and social protection policies”. The Commission also reviewed relevant United Nations plans and programmes of action pertaining to the situation of social groups, the social dimensions of the New Partnership for Africa’s Development and the emerging issue: “The empowerment of people affected by natural and manmade disasters to reduce inequality: addressing the differential impact on persons with disabilities, older persons and youth.”
- Inequality was underscored as a defining issue of the present time. After more than 20 years after the World Summit for Social Development, progress remained slow and uneven and major gaps remained. Current trends demonstrated that income inequality not only persisted but had also increased within many countries, undermining poverty eradication efforts. Emphasis should be placed on the role of progressive taxation in favour of low-income households and public spending to support vulnerable populations. The fundamental role of international cooperation and renewed partnerships to support national efforts was highlighted. High inequality hampered growth and undermined social cohesion. Higher education spending had been the most important driver behind the declining trend in income inequality. There was concern that development had not sufficiently benefited Africa’s poorest people as the continent continued to grapple with high levels of poverty and inequality.
- Delegates underscored the challenges posed by rising inequality, as high inequality weakened the impact of growth on the reduction of poverty and diminished social cohesion, leading to social tensions. The need for policies to ensure equal opportunities and access to public services for all, and to support investment in human capabilities, especially for those at the bottom of income distribution, was emphasized. Progressive taxation to finance basic services, especially health, education and social protection, and increased investment in decent and sustainable work, as well as in the institutions of decent work, including in wage-determination mechanisms, were identified as crucial. The need to eliminate the gender pay gap in low-wage jobs was also highlighted as critical to reducing overall wage inequality.
- Member States stressed the importance of fiscal, wage and social protection policies. Delegations also highlighted the need for broader social protection systems to support families, as they were the fundamental social unit of society and played an important role in the delivery of the 2030 Agenda. Delegations also called for better global governance and the alignment of the 2030 Agenda with national needs, priorities and strategies.
- In Latin America and the Caribbean, disruptions in global economic relations, including trade tensions and rapid technological change, were worsening inequality. In the Arab region, conflicts had compounded inequality and undermined State capacities to provide social services. In the Asia and the Pacific region, inequality in income and opportunities was on the rise, leaving many people behind.
- The Commission for Social Development decided to continue to give prominence to, and raise awareness of, the social dimensions of the New Partnership and give due consideration to Agenda 2063 of the African Union at its fifty-eighth session. It also recognized the importance of promoting the full and effective participation of young people, youth-led and youth-focused organizations and urges Member States to ensure that youth issues are adequately addressed in the implementation, follow-up and review of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.
- In reviewing its methods of work, the Commission underscored the commitment of Member States to strengthening the Commission for Social Development. It was noted that the Commission was the



principal United Nations forum for intensive global dialogue on social development issues and emerging issues that had a strong bearing on inclusive, equitable and sustainable development, and in promoting the integrated treatment of social development issues in the UN system. The Commission decided to continue to consider the biennialization of its resolutions with a view to strengthening the resolution on the priority theme and to eliminating duplication and overlap and promoting complementarity. The Commission also decided to consider its priority theme each year based on the follow-up and review of the World Summit for Social Development and its linkages to the social dimensions of the 2030 Agenda. The Commission decided the priority theme for the fifty-eighth session would be “Affordable housing and social protection systems for all to address homelessness” and that it would adopt a decision at the fifty-eighth session to establish the priority theme for its fifty-ninth session. Furthermore, the Commission would adopt a multi year programme of work at its fifty-ninth session, subsequent to the review of the implementation of General Assembly resolution 70/299.

Statistical Commission

- In its report on the fiftieth session (5-8 March 2019), the Statistical Commission recommended one draft decision for adoption by the Council and twenty-four decisions to be brought to the attention of the Council.
- In decision 50/101 “Global indicator framework for the Sustainable Development Goals and targets of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development”, the Commission stressed that many countries still face challenges in addressing the data needs for the Sustainable Development Goals, and reiterated the urgent need for increased resources and coordinated statistical and analytical capacity-building, in particular for African countries, the least developed countries, landlocked developing countries and small island developing States.
- In decision 50/102 “Data and indicators for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development”, the Commission reiterated the importance of statistical training and capacity-building, welcomed the efforts of the Global Network of Institutions for Statistical Training, and requested the Network to continue its work as an important contribution to the improvement of data and statistics for the Sustainable Development Goals.
- In decision 50/103 “Partnership, Coordination and Capacity-Building for Statistics for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development”, the Commission recognized the urgent need for a better coordinated and more efficient United Nations statistical system, to reduce the reporting burden and to raise the standing of official statistics within the United Nations system, and, to that end, supported the following recommendations: (i) to immediately strengthen the existing coordination mechanisms, (ii) to then take the issue of official statistics to the higher political level, including the Economic and Social Council and (iii) to ensure the active involvement of the statistical community, as presented in the background document prepared by the High-level Group, as appropriate. In addition, the Commission noted that before taking a clear message to the higher political level, including the Economic and Social Council, further inclusive, efficient and transparent consultations, among Member States and entities of the United Nations system and members of other international statistical systems, would be necessary.

Committee for Development Policy

- In its report on the twenty-first session (11-15 March 2019), the Committee for Development Policy brought a number of recommendations to the attention of the Council.
- The Committee addressed the following items: the annual theme of the Economic and Social Council for 2019, “Empowering people and ensuring inclusiveness and equality”; the voluntary national reviews of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development; an update on the progress of the



multi-year programme on a comprehensive review of the least developed country criteria; the monitoring of countries that are graduating or have graduated from the list of least developed countries; a review of the application of the least developed country category by United Nations development system organizations; improved assistance for graduating and graduated least developed countries; and input to the preparations for the next programme of action for least developed countries.

- The Committee recommended that the Economic and Social Council call on Governments to further strengthen the voluntary national review process and, in doing so, consider the findings contained in its report.
- The Committee recommended that, through its choice of themes, the Economic and Social Council focus its substantive sessions on concrete issues standing in the way of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and solutions to those issues.
- The Committee recommended that the new programme of action for the least developed countries for the decade 2021–2030 be fully aligned with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. It proposes that the new programme of action use expansion of the productive capacity for sustainable development as the organizing framework for achieving the goals and the underlying participatory processes. Moreover, the programme of action should strengthen the means to increase resilience to economic and environmental vulnerabilities. The programme of action should take into account the implications of significant changes in the composition of the least developed country category over the next decade, in particular the geographical concentration of least developed countries in sub-Saharan Africa and the prevalence of conflict and post-conflict situations, and incorporate additional measures that enable the remaining least developed countries to benefit more effectively from the specific support provided. It should also emphasize support to graduating countries.
- On the ECOSOC and HLPF theme, the Committee emphasized that current levels of inequality were unacceptable and unsustainable. Moving towards inclusiveness and equality requires overturning processes that disempower people and communities. Development under unfettered market conditions and poor institutional frameworks can be disempowering when people are excluded or when participation in productive systems is under conditions that would leave people vulnerable, such as unpaid work. Climate change risks are a major factor in the disempowerment of communities, directly and through the additional burden they place on the resources of the poorest Governments. This combination of factors not only clashes with the ideals of social justice, equity and sustainability, but also fuels conflict and insecurity.
- In the view of the Committee, the voluntary national reviews could become more effective instruments to share lessons learned and promote mutual learning with the inclusion of more explicit and detailed discussions on national strategies for implementing the 2030 Agenda. Substantive coverage of the voluntary national reviews should be more comprehensive; reporting should not be selective and leave out major areas, especially since the 2030 Agenda is intended to be indivisible and integrated. The Committee also highlighted the need for further work and sharing of experiences in effectively translating the central principle of leaving no one behind into development strategies and frameworks.
- The Committee took stock of its implementation of the multi-year programme for a comprehensive review of the least developed country criteria, which will be concluded at the next plenary of the Committee, in 2020, so that the refined criteria can be applied at the 2021 triennial review of the least developed country category.
- In its monitoring of countries that are graduating and have graduated from the least developed country category, the Committee reviewed the development progress of Equatorial Guinea, which has graduated, and of Angola and Vanuatu, which are graduating. While noting that none of the countries appear at risk of falling back to the least developed country category, the Committee highlighted the vulnerability of Vanuatu to economic and environmental shocks. It also remains concerned at the continuing imbalance



between the per capita income and the level of human assets in Equatorial Guinea and Angola, as well as the macroeconomic challenges caused by their overreliance on the oil sector.

- The Committee noted that the least developed country category had been useful in attracting political support for the least developed countries, but had, to a much lesser extent, led to explicit assistance, even from the United Nations development system. Although all United Nations development system entities recognize the least developed country category, they do not all provide specific international support for least developed countries. The Committee urges the United Nations development system organizations to use the least developed country category more in programming and budgeting and to develop common guidelines.
- The Committee also noted with concern that most United Nations development system entities do not have specific graduation support programmes or mechanisms to phase out support for graduating countries.
- The Committee emphasized that many least developed countries are concerned about the prospect of graduation and losing international support measures and underscored that it was necessary to provide an incentive to those countries that qualify to graduate from the category. The Committee decided that, in view of the need to encourage a country-led demand for specific types of graduation support, the focus should first be geared towards improvements in the graduation support process and related mechanisms. In this regard, the Committee discussed and decided to pilot a series of new recommendations aimed at strengthening support to graduating and graduated countries.
- The Committee proposes that the theme of “Expanding productive capacity for sustainable development” should be used as the organizing framework of the new programme of action and that the programme of action should be meaningfully aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals. The proposed framework provides a coherent and integrated approach and it is based on five key elements, namely, building development governance capabilities; creating positive synergies between social outcomes and productive capacities; establishing appropriate macroeconomic and financial frameworks; developing industrial and sectoral policies that promote technological upgrading and structural transformation; and providing adequate international support. The Committee also highlights the importance of providing smooth transition and graduation support for countries graduating from the least developed countries category and the need for additional measures to support the remaining least developed countries, particularly in Africa, to better integrate them into the global economy. It also underscores the importance of continuing discussion on developing an adequate support framework for building resilience to climate change and other environmental shocks.

Committee of Experts on Global Geospatial Information Management

- In its report on the eighth session (1-3 August 2018), the Committee of Experts on Global Geospatial Information Management recommended sixteen decisions to be brought to the attention of the Council.
- The Committee of Experts was encouraged by the activities and progress of its subcommittee, expert and working groups, deliberated and debated, provided guidance and made joint decisions that further strengthened the coordination and coherence of global geospatial information management, including the application of geospatial information for sustainable development.
- The Committee accepted an updated 2018-2022 Strategic Framework as a reference point for coordination, coherence and prioritizing the work programmes and activities of the Committee.
- The Committee adopted the Integrated Geospatial Information Framework, a result of the close cooperation between UNSD/DESA and the World Bank. The Framework represents a decisive step in strengthening national geospatial information management capacities and capabilities, and a mechanism to develop national (or sub-national) actions plans that will be used to mobilize both domestic and international (especially World Bank) resources;



- The Committee endorsed the Compendium on Licensing of Geospatial Information, acknowledged as a comprehensive document to guide and assist Member States to understand legal and policy considerations that impact the collection, use, storage and dissemination of geospatial information, and can serve as a foundation document for several other initiatives, including developing good practices in the future.
- The Committee expressed continued commitment and support for the United Nations World Geospatial Information Congress, convened in Deqing, Zhejiang, China from 19 - 21 November 2018, as a milestone global event that would continue to grow the coherence and coordination of global geospatial information for Member States, and a unique opportunity to raise the visibility of geospatial information management as an enabler of sustainable development; and welcomed the convening of the Sixth High-level Forum on Global Geospatial Information Management in the United Kingdom in April 2020, to be hosted by the Ordnance Survey of Great Britain on behalf of the United Kingdom.