



ECOSOC

United Nations Economic and Social Council

TAKING ACTION TO IMPROVE LIVES

Meeting of the Economic and Social Council with the Chairpersons of the Functional Commissions and Expert Bodies

31 January 2020, 10:00 am – 12:00 pm

INFORMAL SUMMARY

The President of the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) convened a meeting of the Bureau of ECOSOC with the Chairpersons of the Functional Commissions and Expert Bodies on 31 January 2020.¹ For the first time, the annual meeting was open to the ECOSOC Member States and the entire membership of the UN. The meeting, which was well attended, focused on contributions of the ECOSOC eco-system to the 2020 theme of ECOSOC and the HLPF “*Accelerated action and transformative pathways: realizing the decade of action and delivery for sustainable development*”. The Chairs’ interventions focused on their planned contributions to the HLPF thematic review and ECOSOC as well as their views on the implementation of the provisions of General Assembly resolution 72/305 on the strengthening of ECOSOC. Many delegations expressed their appreciation for the dialogue, which allowed the entire membership of ECOSOC to acquire a deeper understanding of the important work of the ECOSOC subsidiary bodies and discuss ideas for further enhancing their relationship with the Council and their work.

Contributions by Functional Commissions and Expert Bodies to the 2020 ECOSOC and HLPF Theme

Chairs shared their respective commission or bodies’ plans for contributing to the 2020 HLPF thematic review on ECOSOC as well as their cooperation with each other for their upcoming sessions.

- The Commission for Social Development (CSocD) (10-19 February 2020) will address the priority theme of “Affordable housing and social protection systems for all to address homelessness”, through a focus on affordable housing policies and social protection systems for all within the context of the 2030 Agenda. This year also marks the 25th anniversary of the World Summit for Social Development. A Ministerial Forum during the Commission will commemorate this anniversary to address emerging societal challenges to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, those include changes in demographic dynamics, high and rising inequality, negative effects of climate change and natural disasters, rapid technological change.
- The Committee for Development Policy (CDP) (24-27 February 2020): The CDP will address the ECOSOC theme during its plenary session of 24-27 February with a focus on the elements of a global transformation towards a green and equitable future. It will continue to analyse the VNRs to promote their effectiveness in advancing the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. A significant share of the work undertaken by the CDP is on the Least Developed Countries. During the decade of action, a number of countries are expected to graduate from the category. The CDP is working to ensure these countries are adequately supported in this transition and do not see any reversals of their development.

¹ The Chairpersons of the Commission on Population and Development (CPD), the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) and the UN Forum on Forests, as well as the Vice-Chair-designate of the Commission for Social Development (CSocD) attended the meeting. The Chairpersons of the Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice (CCPCJ), the Commission on Narcotic Drugs (CND), the Commission on Science and Technology for Development (CSTD), the Committee of Experts on Public Administration (CEPA), the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues (PFII), the Statistical Commission and the UN Committee of Experts on Global Geospatial Information Management (UNGGIM) and the UN Group of Experts on Geographical Names (UNGEGN) joined remotely. The Secretary of the Committee for Development Policy (CDP) also attended the meeting.

The CDP will also continue to address aspects of multilateralism with regard to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

- The Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) (9-20 March 2020) will conduct a review and appraisal of the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and its contribution to the gender-responsive implementation of the 2030 Agenda. In addition, there will be an event on “UN@75: CSW’s contribution to “The future we want, the UN we need: reaffirming our collective commitment to multilateralism”. This will provide an opportunity to identify key challenges and solutions to strengthen multilateralism in the service of gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls.
- The Commission on Narcotic Drugs (CND) (2-6 March 2020), in its 2019 Ministerial Declaration, highlighted Member States’ commitment to focus beyond 2019 on the practical implementation of all international drug policy commitments made over the past decade. “Accelerated action” is therefore at the core of its agenda for 2020 and beyond, contributing to the implementation of various SDGs and also touching upon entry points identified by the Global Sustainable Development Report for accelerating progress.
- The Statistical Commission (3-6 March 2020) continues to contribute through its work on the global indicator framework. The work of its Inter-Agency and Expert Group on Sustainable Development Goal Indicators (IAEG-SDGs) recently conducted a comprehensive review of the global indicator framework. This review proposes concrete actions and improvements to the measurement framework. It will be submitted to the Statistical Commission in March 2020 for its consideration. The Statistical Commission’s work programme also includes elements on a rotational or ad hoc basis with flexibility to react to the evolving data ecosystem, including addressing innovative topics (big and open data and AI techniques). The Statistical Commission also supports the establishment of an innovative financing mechanism to help Governments strengthen capacity and build sustainable statistical systems, as called for in the Dubai Declaration.
- The Commission on Science and Technology for Development (CSTD) (23-27 March 2020) will focus on two priority themes “Harnessing rapid technological change for inclusive and sustainable development” and “Exploring space technologies for sustainable development and the benefits of international research collaboration in this context”. Both themes speak to the role of technology in accelerating action in a cross-cutting manner. The CSTD is increasingly developing its function as an international bridgebuilder in science and technology. It facilitated initiatives for capacity-building collaboration, in particular South-South collaboration, and is putting a strong emphasis on bringing the UN system together in its work.
- The Commission on Population and Development (CPD) (30 March-3 April 2020) will focus on “Population, food security, nutrition and sustainable development” to provide guidance on integration of population dimensions into national policy design and development planning. Following the session, CPD will submit a note for the 2020 HLPF review and ECOSOC session. In line with previous practice, this note will draw on the outcomes of the Commission, the reports of the Secretary-General, and the statements made by Member States and invited speakers.
- The Committee of Experts on Public Administration (CEPA) (30 March-3 April 2020) will focus on “Promoting effective governance and institutional reform to accelerate delivery of the SDGs”. In 2019, ECOSOC encouraged Governments at all levels to consider applying the principles of effective governance for sustainable development to all public institutions and in support of the implementation of all SDGs taking into account different governance structures, national realities, capacities and levels of development and respecting national policies and priorities. At the nineteenth session the Committee will expand on the framework with an emphasis on putting principles into practice and reviewing outcomes. CEPA has initiated the practice of inviting interesting VNR countries to engage in a dialogue directly with the Experts on institutional aspects of SDG 16 during its annual session.

- The Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues (PFII) (13-24 April 2020) has a standing agenda item on the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs. Given its mandate, PFII can contribute on a range of issues that can help guide SDG achievement, including on peace and conflict, climate change, bio-diversity, education and health. One of the key mandates of the Permanent Forum is to promote the coordination of indigenous issues within the United Nations through the system wide action plan on the rights of indigenous peoples aimed at implementing the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. PFII provides concrete advice on how the development system can strengthen the rights of indigenous peoples as part of the principle of leaving no one behind.
- The Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice (CCPCJ) (18-22 May 2020) will make crucial contributions to a decade of action and delivery for sustainable development, as the main policy-making body in the field of crime prevention and criminal justice, as well as the preparatory body for the UN Crime Congresses. In 2020, the 14th Congress will be held in Kyoto, Japan, and will set the tone for international policy for the years to come. The CCPCJ is expected to endorse the outcome of the Congress at its regular session in May this year.
- The UN Forum on Forests (UNFF) (4-8 May 2020) will hold a policy dialogue on the implementation of the UN Strategic Plan for Forests. It will continue to be in the forefront of setting the global agenda on forests, to promote the management, conservation and sustainable development of all types of forests. The UNFF is expected to adopt its new programme of work for 2021-2024 at UNFF15 session in May this year. At this session, the Forum is also expected to produce a ministerial declaration which will be considered at the high-level segment.
- Since the adoption of the 2030 Agenda, specific national to global geospatial frameworks developed or adopted by the UN Committee of Experts on Global Geospatial Information Management (UN-GGIM) include the: Integrated Geospatial Information Framework, Global Statistical Geospatial Framework, Strategic Framework on Geospatial Information and Services for Disasters and Framework for Effective Land Administration. The development of these frameworks is augmented by capacity-building efforts to support the implementation, communication and promotion of UN-GGIM's work and, in-turn to support the broader attainment of the 2030 Agenda and other global agendas.
- The United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names (UNGEGN) is currently organizing its work to address its core mandate and that of supporting the broader UN system. In recognition of the overarching 2030 Agenda, it has added supporting sustainable development to its agenda. At its first session (29 April to 3 May 2019) the Group of Experts made three recommendations aimed at aligning its work to that of the wider UN and ECOSOC, including the development of a draft strategic plan and programme of work.

During the meeting, participants shared some preliminary key messages in relation to the 2020 ECOSOC and HLPF theme and HLPF thematic review:

- Silo-thinking at all levels is hampering the holistic implementation of the SDGs. A strong political commitment will be needed for breaking down the political and administrative silos within international policy action, development aid, and peacebuilding, as well as for the reinforcement of existing multilateral and regional political and economic mechanisms. Integrating the SDGs in budgeting may benefit from a shift towards performance-based budgeting.
- Accelerated action towards the SDGs can be achieved through mechanisms such as legislative reform and collaborative models of governance; access to quality public services with a focus on education; promotion of transparency and accountability; balancing long-term needs with short term urgencies; resource mobilization for the achievement of strategic, institutional and policy goals; and real-time actions at local and community levels.
- Several enablers and catalysts of accelerated action and transformative pathways for SDG delivery include public-private partnerships, electronic and open government, inclusive service delivery,

training, public sector ethics, transparency and innovation. Combatting corruption is a precondition of effective governance for accelerating the implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

- Leaving no one behind requires a transformation of deeply rooted systems (economic and political systems, governance structures and business models) that are often based on unequal distributions of wealth and of decision-making power. Models of growth that push people behind and thrive on their vulnerability must be delegitimized.
- At subnational levels, leaving no one behind can be promoted through decentralization, local development and increased resource transfers to local areas. It will often require avoiding top-down approaches to local development and the establishment of focal points within communities to assess the extent of possible decentralization, value optimization and impact of national-local transfers.
- Government institutions are not able to implement the SDGs at desired scale and speed because of a general undervaluing of the public sector in economic theories of the past decades, which has resulted in smaller but less effective public administration and a disregard of the public value that it may create.
- Member States should take innovative approaches to rule-setting and policymaking, including in the design of tax systems, models for public services delivery, industrial policies and intellectual property rights regimes.

Responding to GA resolution 72/305 on Review of the implementation of GA resolution 68/1 on the strengthening of ECOSOC

The meeting discussed the response to GA resolution 72/305 on the strengthening of ECOSOC. With respect to the division of labour among ECOSOC subsidiary bodies envisioned in resolution 72/305, some Chairs emphasized that each subsidiary body had its area of expertise and partnerships yielded efficiencies. Several Chairpersons highlighted their continued collaboration with other bodies, including by organizing joint events and participating in each other's sessions. Negotiated outcomes were considered essential for setting normative standards, while decisions were necessary to guide the work of the body. Some highlighted their efforts to strengthen and adapt their working methods in response to the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs. For example, the Statistical Commission has enhanced its working methods and outcomes through a comprehensive review of groups working under the Commission. The CPD Bureau has initiated a discussion on options for initiating a discussion on the revitalisation of the Commission.

Delegations welcomed their efforts and underscored the need to better align the work of the subsidiary bodies with the 2030 Agenda, while expressing concern about the slow alignment. ECOSOC could be more effective and more relevant if sustainable development is at the core of all subsidiary bodies. Better cooperation, information sharing, work alignment and coordination between subsidiary bodies was considered key for the effective implementation of the 2030 Agenda. Other key issues raised included the need to strengthen coherence, synergies and coordination, accountability and to enhance and better use of the contribution of subsidiary bodies to the work of ECOSOC and HLPF. For example, as Voluntary National Reviews (VNR) during the July HLPF did not allow for sufficient time to discuss all aspects of SDG implementation in depth, CEPA invites interested VNR countries to engage in a dialogue with CEPA experts on institutional aspects of SDG 16 during its annual session.

The need to focus on cross-cutting issues and work together in a coherent manner was stressed. The importance of ensuring a gender responsive implementation of the 2030 Agenda, also focusing efforts on natural resource management, ecosystem preservation as well as science, technology and innovation was highlighted.

Recommendations emanating from interventions:

- ECOSOC could enhance the contributions of subsidiary bodies, including through:

- ◆ making the work of the subsidiary bodies an integral part of the HLPF: For example, outputs of the different bodies could be the basis for the substantive background documents of HLPF sessions and in the formulation of the questions for discussion. To the extent possible, these outcomes should be made available in a consolidated document to delegates before the negotiation of outcome documents, in addition to being presented at the Integration Segment.
- ◆ allocating sessions to specific topics during the HLPF: For example, the Statistical Commission could contribute to a specific session on data and statistics.
- ◆ giving a formal role to some of the Chairs of subsidiary bodies during the HLPF, in the form of a seat to make substantive interventions, or to participate in panels, as appropriate.
- ◆ identifying a theme for ECOSOC and HLPF in advance with clear objectives and providing early guidance (18 to 24 months in advance) on the needs of the Integration Segment and HLPF.
- ◆ requesting specific inputs on linkages among SDGs and across subsidiary bodies in the outcome of the Integration Segment or in resolutions/decisions of subsidiary bodies. For example, in relation to CEPA discussions on public financial management and the work the Committee on International Cooperation on Tax Matters.
- ◆ convening back to back meetings, to make it more cost-efficient and easier to attend when joining from outside NYC.
- ◆ adjusting the calendar of meetings and reporting arrangements.
- Subsidiary bodies should accelerate their alignment with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development for the decade of action and delivery of sustainable development.
- Some said that future ECOSOC/HLPF themes should refer to global megatrends and the most pressing problems calling for global action. Themes could also refer to core aspirations of the 2030 Agenda, balancing the economic, social and environmental dimensions of sustainable development, and transformative actions at all levels to reduce inequalities and leave no one behind. The theme should be defined based on what ECOSOC expects to achieve and be formulated in a way that will lead to the identification of concrete action.
- ECOSOC could consider organizing the ECOSOC system around the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, with a focus on (i) cross cutting issues such as statistics, or specific populations like women and youth; (ii) the three dimensions of sustainable development; and (iii) issues related to the means of implementation; such as technology or finance.
- ECOSOC should support its subsidiary bodies in ensuring adequate financial resources to fulfill their mandates, as the decade of action will need adequate and sustained funding. ECOSOC should support and enhance the visibility of the work of its subsidiary bodies, including of statistical offices and statistical systems.
- Some said that ECOSOC could provide more opportunities for civil society to engage and voice their opinions in its substantive sessions. ECOSOC could include selected Civil Society members to be part of the negotiations to help bring these implementations to life.
- ECOSOC could convene an in-depth follow-up to the joint meeting and ensure a more sustained and institutionalized interaction between the ECOSOC and its subsidiary bodies. There is a need to think more creatively about how the different subsidiary bodies of the Council can support and enrich each other's work in a more interactive manner.

The Way Forward

The ECOSOC President will follow-up with the Chairs of ECOSOC subsidiary bodies requesting their responses to the questions raised during the meeting (see Annex). A follow-up meeting could be organized [in the margins of the Management Segment of the Council?] to continue the dialogue with the subsidiary bodies.

Annex I: Key Guiding Questions for the Meeting

- **How will functional commissions and other subsidiary bodies contribute to the HLPF review of the theme for 2020 and to ECOSOC?**
- **What initial key policy messages can be offered on the 2020 theme, based on the work of the functional commissions and other subsidiary bodies thus far?**
- **What key initiatives will the subsidiary bodies take to realize the Decade of Action?**
- **What are some of the implementation gaps of the 2030 Agenda that subsidiary bodies aim to address?**
- **How can the contributions of the ECOSOC subsidiary bodies to the HLPF thematic review and the work of ECOSOC be better utilized?**
- **What are some good practices in implementing the provisions of General Assembly resolution 72/305?**
- **How can subsidiary bodies further enhance their working methods and outcomes in response to resolution 72/305?**
- **In which area could the division of labour and cooperation among subsidiary bodies be improved?**
- **How can ECOSOC best support enhanced work of subsidiary bodies?**
- **How can the Integration Segment deliver on its mandates, guide the work of ECOSOC subsidiary bodies and consolidate their key messages on the HLPF and ECOSOC theme?**
- **In view of the Decade of Action and the work of subsidiary bodies, what are your recommendations for possible future themes for the ECOSOC substantive session and the HLPF?**

Annex II: Questions/issues for Follow-up

- Should the Council set the “priority” or “emerging issue” themes for the bodies (ex-ante) rather than endorsing the themes that the various bodies propose independently of each other during the Management Segment with a view to promoting system-wide coherence?
- How can ECOSOC facilitate the alignment of the themes of the subsidiary bodies with the main theme of the Council?
- In which area could the division of labour and cooperation among subsidiary bodies be improved and how can ECOSOC support this process?
- Should the Council set the “priority” or “emerging issue” themes for the bodies rather than endorsing the themes that the various bodies propose independently of each other during the Management Segment?
- Once themes have been identified, should the ECOSOC Bureau convene a planning session with Chairpersons that would lead to the joint work/sessions on specific cross-cutting issues?
- How can each subsidiary body work to internally align with other relevant bodies, and how could they report back to ECOSOC about such alignment?
- What can the Council and its bodies bring in these discussions this year on the review of the peacebuilding architecture? Are there any concrete ideas that you can bring to these discussions from the perspective of a technical body of ECOSOC?