



THE PRESIDENT  
OF THE  
GENERAL ASSEMBLY

14 August 2020

Excellency,

I have the pleasure to transmit herewith a letter from H.E. Ms. Mona Juul, former President of the United Nations Economic and Social Council. The letter conveys the summary of the discussion on “*Multilateralism after COVID 19: What kind of UN do we need at the 75th anniversary?*” as a contribution of the Council to the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary commemoration of the United Nations.

Please accept, Excellency, the assurance of my highest consideration.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Tijjani Muhammad-Bande'.

Tijjani Muhammad-Bande

All Permanent Representatives and  
Permanent Observers to the United Nations  
New York



The President  
of the  
Economic and Social Council

22 July 2020

Subject: Contribution by the Council to the 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Commemoration of the United Nations

Excellency,

In view of ECOSOC's role as a Charter organ of the United Nations and a key instrument of multilateralism, the Council has made a substantive contribution to the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary commemoration of the United Nations and its theme: "The future we want, the United Nations we need: reaffirming our collective commitment to multilateralism."

On 17 July 2020 during its High-Level Segment, the Council held a high-level dialogue on concrete steps the international community could take, including through ECOSOC, to enhance global solidarity and international cooperation in response to the COVID-19 pandemic as well as long-term challenges such as climate change, biodiversity loss and rising inequalities, while accelerating progress towards the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

In the spirit of an open and more inclusive multilateralism, the dialogue brought together the voices and views of a variety of stakeholders, including civil society, youth, and the private sector, and high-level representatives of Member States, including Heads of Government and Ministers, as well as the Secretary-General of the United Nations, to provide their perspectives on the kind of multilateralism needed for a forward looking and effective collective response to current global crises and long-term challenges.

I have the honour to share with you the Summary of the discussion on "*Multilateralism after COVID 19: What kind of UN do we need at the 75th anniversary?*" and would be grateful if it could be circulated widely, as a contribution of the Council to the 75th anniversary commemoration of the United Nations.

Please accept, Excellency, the assurances of my highest consideration.

Mona Juul  
President of ECOSOC

His Excellency  
Mr. Tijjani Muhammad-Bande  
President of the General Assembly  
New York





*ECOSOC High Level Segment*

**Multilateralism after COVID 19:  
what kind of UN do we need at the 75th anniversary?**

*17 July 2020 from 9:45 a.m. – 11:30 a.m. EDT*

**PRESIDENT'S SUMMARY**

The High-Level Segment of the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) convened a high-level discussion on “*Multilateralism after COVID 19: What kind of UN do we need at the 75th anniversary?*” as a contribution of the Council to the 75th anniversary commemoration of the United Nations.

The opening featured remarks by the United Nations Secretary-General. The session featured a panel of outstanding leaders in their respective fields moderated by H.E. Mr. Kevin Rudd, former Prime Minister of Australia and Chair of the Board of Directors of the International Peace Institute. Speakers included the Secretary-General of OECD, the President of IUCN, the President of the 14th meeting of the Conference of Parties of the UN Convention on Biodiversity, the CEO of the UN Global Compact, the Secretary General’s Envoy on Youth and the Chair of the Board of CIVICUS. Following the panel discussion, more than 30 Members States, including the Prime Ministers of Norway and India along with 15 Ministers, delivered statements.

Main messages from the session include:

- During this time of crisis, a firm commitment is needed to multilateralism and to the United Nations;
- The current crisis has demonstrated the need for a renewed and reinvigorated multilateralism and strengthening of the United Nations, which is at the core of international cooperation and the global response;





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- The COVID-19 crisis and longer-term challenges, such as climate change, biodiversity loss, the promotion and protection of human rights, and migration, can only be addressed effectively by countries, civil society, and the private sector working together;
- There is a need for multilateralism to become more inclusive and open to the voices and participation of other stakeholders and more resilient and better prepared to respond to current and longer-term crises;
- The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is a blueprint and roadmap for a more resilient, fairer and greener recovery and for building forward.
- A revitalized Economic and Social Council needs to be at the heart of a networked, inclusive, resilient and effective multilateralism.

In the midst of a worldwide pandemic, as well as enormous social and economic challenges, the threat of climate change, protracted conflicts, pervasive poverty, rising inequality and racism, the world is witnessing a retreat from multilateralism. However, global crises require global solutions and global solidarity. A multilateral approach is vital for effectively responding to challenges that transcend national boundaries, such as health pandemics, climate change, biodiversity loss, the promotion and protection of human rights, and migration. There was broad agreement among participants that the United Nations is at the heart of the multilateral system and is the preeminent platform for multilateral responses and international solidarity.

Some speakers highlighted that the COVID-19 pandemic has exposed and exacerbated vulnerabilities and inequalities within and among countries, including access to finance and the fragility of food, international trade, health and climate systems. The pandemic threatens to severely roll back decades of development successes and impedes SDG implementation. This requires a re-imagining of the way countries cooperate. It calls for a strengthened and renewed multilateralism that is more resilient and better prepared to respond to crises and longer-term challenges to sustainable development.

For multilateralism to become more responsive and effective, it must become more inclusive and open to a broader variety of voices and viewpoints, strengthening the voices and participation of civil society, the private sector, the scientific community and other non-state actors. Trust among countries and in international institutions, which has eroded over time, must be restored. The private sector also has an important role to play in reinvigorating multilateralism by demonstrating ethical leadership and good governance, addressing systemic inequalities and injustices in supply chains and partnering with governments and civil society to respect and strengthen institutions, laws and systems at the national and international levels.





Participants emphasized that political will and leadership, credible and effective international institutions, a broadening of participation and an enhanced focus on global public goods were key components of a renewed multilateralism. Investments in global public goods and multilateral cooperation, including in the areas of health care, digital cooperation, education, and a healthy ecosystem, were essential for overcoming the crises. Participants also called for increased international financing, comprehensive debt relief, ending illicit financial flows and enhanced technology transfer to help governments cope with the pandemic. Many speakers considered universal access to a COVID-19 vaccine and effective treatment as a basic public good that needed to be affordable and accessible to all. The world's scientists should be mobilized in a massive global effort to develop such a vaccine.

Many speakers observed that the United Nations Charter and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development provided the overarching frameworks to guide the global response to global crises and to build back better and fairer through the Decade of Action and Delivery of the SDGs. Participants stressed that this was the time for global action, to build back better, fairer, and greener through innovative approaches and by investing in preparedness and prevention in order to avert future health and climate crises. Human health and a healthy ecosystem are intricately related. A healthy and sustainable planet ensures sustainable livelihoods, and the single most important inter-generational challenge is protecting the planet and fighting climate change and biodiversity loss.

Many speakers stressed that the United Nations, as the heart of the multilateral system, must be people-centered, promote and protect human rights, be gender-responsive, serve the most vulnerable and furthest behind, and support a whole-of-society and whole-of-government approach to ensure no one is left behind. Advancing gender equality and the empowerment of women and defending and upholding the rights of all women and girls must be at the center of the work of the United Nations. Some speakers emphasized that the United Nations must promote equity, inclusivity and transparency and be more agile and responsive to the changing global context. Leaving no one behind is central to the achievement of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and protecting the poorest and most vulnerable needs to guide the global response.

Participants underscored that the Economic and Social Council offered an inclusive platform to engage and mobilize governments, local communities, the UN system, international finance institutions, civil society and young people around the world to address the world's pressing challenges. The Council could connect with a much wider global audience and develop a strengthened relationship with its subsidiary bodies and with the governing boards of UN development system entities, with a clearer division of labor with the General Assembly. A revitalized ECOSOC as the mothership for sustainable, inclusive development, as stated by the Secretary General in his opening address, was at





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the heart of a networked, inclusive and effective multilateralism and could help to advance the cooperation needed to solve global problems. The ongoing General Assembly process on the review and strengthening of ECOSOC offered an important opportunity to enhance the Council's role and potential within the broader context of a renewal of multilateralism and global governance.



*Accelerated action and transformative pathways: realizing the decade of action and delivery for sustainable development*