



# ECOSOC

United Nations Economic and Social Council

TAKING ACTION TO IMPROVE LIVES

## Meeting with the Chairs of the ECOSOC Functional Commissions and Expert Bodies

22 January 2020  
10:00 am – 12:00 pm  
ECOSOC Chamber

### Annotated Agenda

#### 1. Contributions by Functional Commissions and Expert Bodies to ECOSOC, including the Integration Segment, and the 2020 High Level Political Forum (HLPF)

The theme for ECOSOC and the HLPF for 2020, adopted on 22 November 2019, is “Accelerated action and transformative pathways: realizing the decade of action and delivery for sustainable development”. This theme echoes the Political Declaration of the first HLPF under the auspices of the General Assembly in September 2019. The declaration proclaimed 2020-2030 as a decade of action and delivery for sustainable development.

The HLPF will be held from 7 – 16 July, including the 3-day Ministerial Meeting. The Integration Segment will be held one day before on 6<sup>th</sup> July.

#### Suggested questions

**What initial key policy messages can be offered on the 2020 theme, based on the work of the functional commissions and other expert bodies?**

- CEPA will consider the theme for ECOSOC and HLPF for 2020 from a governance and public administration perspective, in accordance with its mandate. The corresponding theme of the 19<sup>th</sup> session of CEPA (30 March-3 April 2020) is “Promoting effective governance and institutional reform to accelerate delivery of the SDGs”
- An expert paper has been prepared on this topic that will serve as a basis for discussion during the session (E/C.16/2020/2 – forthcoming).
- Initial key policy messages:
  - Accelerated action calls for both incremental reforms that target long-term, cumulative results as well as ‘fast-track’ reform initiatives based on innovative breakthroughs.
  - Accelerated action can be achieved through such mechanisms as: legislative reform and collaborative models of governance; access to quality public services with focus on education; promotion of transparency and accountability; balancing of 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.

- Innovation and acceleration may produce both success and failure. Accelerating the implementation of the SDGs requires policy and governance innovation, which come with their embedded and corollary risks. Accepting the need to innovate means the willingness to take those risks.
- Governance failures are not contingent upon unpredictable events alone. They often result from a mismatch between a chosen governance design and the problem existing in the context in which it operates.
- Other forms of governance failure emerge because of lack of governance capacity (competences, skills, capabilities) or ineffective management of governance frameworks.
- Another key reason why government institutions are not able to implement the SDGs at desired scale and speed, is 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.
- Acceleration of the implementation of the SDGs will benefit from a switch from public strategy as planning and design to public strategy as learning by doing.
- Combatting corruption is a precondition of effective governance for accelerating the implementation of the 2030 Agenda.
- A significant portion of basic government action is not about innovation or change, let alone about disruptive innovation, but rather about stability and reliability. It is about ensuring the delivery of protection and services to citizens by providing, inter alia, evidence-based and adequate legal and policy frameworks. Where to focus the development of capacity for change depends on the existing quality and performance of public administration and governance in a given institutional setting.
- 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.
- Accelerating action to ensure no one is left behind will require, at the global level, political efforts for breaking down the political and administrative silos within international policy action, development aid, and peace-building, and for the reinforcement of existing multilateral and regional political and economic mechanisms that are conducive to the building of political momentum for dispute settlement and conflict resolution.
- 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.
- One transformative policy area that is repeatedly being identified as a lever for effective governance is sustainable public procurement. E-procurement has also

proven itself to be a transformative tool for SDG implementation, particularly SDG 16.

- Another transformative pathway to sustainable development concerns budgeting for the SDGs. Integrating the SDGs in budgeting may benefit from a shift towards performance-based budgeting particularly since traditional budget structures or "line item budgets" may thwart, or at least not encourage, SDG implementation efforts.
- Artificial Intelligence can be a powerful means to accelerate the implementation of the 2030 Agenda as well as to monitor progress pertaining to all and each specific SDG.

**What key initiatives will your body take to realize the Decade of Action?**

- CEPA agreed on a set of 11 principles of effective governance for sustainable development, building with the essential elements of SDG 16 (namely, effectiveness, accountability and inclusiveness) at its core. The principles, endorsed by ECOSOC in its resolution 2018/12, highlight the need for pragmatic and ongoing improvements in national and local governance capabilities to achieve the SDGs.
- To this end, the principles are linked to a variety of commonly used strategies for operationalizing responsive and effective governance, many of which have been recognized and endorsed over the years in various UN forums, resolutions and treaties.
- In its resolution 2019/26 on the report of the eighteenth session, 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.
- ECOSOC also encouraged CEPA to continue to identify and review related technical guidelines to operationalize the principles and took note of the Committee's initiative to associate a set of agreed global Goal indicators with each of the principles.
- Further elaboration of the principles framework and collaboration with regional organizations to promote operationalization of the principles are among the main activities of CEPA.
- CEPA agreed that the principles of effective governance for sustainable development provide a useful cross-cutting framework for its future work. At the nineteenth session, the Committee will expand on this framework with an emphasis on putting principles into practice and reviewing outcomes.

**What are some of the implementation gaps of the 2030 Agenda that your body aims to address?**

- CEPA has emphasized the critical role of institutions in achieving all of the SDGs and examines progress, identifies prospects and recommends actions for advancing the implementation of institutional aspects of Goal 16 at the national and subnational levels.
- In the lead-up to the 2019 HLPF, CEPA decided to take stock of the institutional aspects of SDG 16, taking into account important linkages between Goal 16 and SDGs, including

Goal 17, and to do so by examining the core elements of effectiveness, accountability and inclusiveness in some depth.

- In doing so, CEPA recognized that in-depth reviews of SDGs 16 could be strengthened by stronger evidence of governance capacities and analysis of trends in many areas, taking into account important linkages between Goal 16 and all Sustainable Development Goals, including Goal 17. Given the scope, technical complexity and interplay of factors that influence institution-building, it is difficult to consider specific elements in isolation from one another.
- CEPA further agreed that in-depth consideration was needed of particular aspects of such broad institutional challenges. It decided in the current session to focus on matters relating to the government and public sector workforce of the future, building institutions for peaceful and inclusive societies and providing access to justice for all, and public sector training and budgeting for the SDGs.

**How can the contributions of the ECOSOC subsidiary bodies to the HLPF thematic review and the work of ECOSOC be better utilized? How can the Integration Segment better channel these inputs into the HLPF?**

- CEPA, as an expert body, has considerable flexibility in responding to the needs of ECOSOC and in providing policy advice in support of the follow-up, review and implementation of the 2030 Agenda.
- In the outcome of the Integration Segment, or in its resolution on the report of CEPA, ECOSOC could consider making specific requests of the subsidiary bodies when important linkages are identified (for example in relation to CEPA discussions on public financial management and the work the Committee on International Cooperation on Tax Matters).
- Early guidance on the needs of the Integration Segment and HLPF would be helpful in preparing relevant outputs. Depending on the inputs needed by ECOSOC, the analytical requirements could be substantial.
- The needs of ECOSOC could helpfully be communicated to the subsidiary bodies 18 to 24 months in advance and, if possible, not later than the session at which the next provisional agenda of the subsidiary body is to be considered by that body (e.g. by the end of March 2020 where the 2021 CEPA session is concerned).

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

In October 2018, the former ECOSOC President held a meeting with the Chairs of subsidiary bodies to discuss the follow-up to GA resolution 72/305 and encourage follow up actions. In July 2019, the President of ECOSOC requested the Chairpersons of the ECOSOC Functional Commissions and Expert Bodies to provide an update on actions taken in response to GA resolution 72/305. Responses highlighted that many subsidiary bodies have embraced the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs as a way to inspire their work, improve their outcomes and become more relevant.

Many bodies continued to collaborate on topics of mutual interest and expertise. The CDP invited the Chairs of functional commissions to attend its Plenary in March 2019. A member of the CDP participated in the 18th session of the CEPA in April 2019. CND closely cooperated with other subsidiary bodies, including CCPCJ, CSW, the Statistical Commission and the CSTD. The CSocD collaborated with CSW for an expert group meeting on social protection. CSTD continued to collaborate with CSW, CND and others whenever possible. During CSW63, a Member of the PFII chaired a side event on culturally appropriate social protection programmes for indigenous women. Through such collaborative efforts, the bodies can provide important substantive contributions and improve the division of labor among themselves.

Some expressed strong support for the continued need for annual negotiated outcomes, as some include resolutions, decisions and policy guidance, as well as to ensure a sense of ownership of the outcomes, as the resolutions and decisions are negotiated and adopted by consensus.

The arrangements contained in resolution 72/305 will be reviewed alongside the resolutions on the HLPF at the seventy-fourth session of the General Assembly. This would be an opportunity for Chairs of subsidiary bodies to reflect on what has worked and what can be improved.

### **Suggested questions**

**Collaboration among subsidiary bodies has proven to be mutually beneficial and helps to improve the division of labor. How does your body propose to regularize such collaboration and put in place the necessary mechanisms to ensure their smooth implementation?**

- CEPA has had productive interactions with Population Commission on demographic trends and CDP on leaving no one behind, as well as Statistical Commission on governance indicators; CEPA also has initiated conversation with Peacebuilding Commission.
- CEPA will continue to explore collaboration with ECOSOC system; this interaction is most productive when considering a specific issue and taking the form of input into ongoing processes.
- In addition, there has been strong collaboration with regional bodies. CEPA has proactively focused, among other, on regional cooperation in promoting effective governance for sustainable development. **For example,** In October 2019, UN DESA and AU/APRM co-organized a regional workshop as a follow-up to the eighteenth session of the Committee, in collaboration with UNDP, that was specifically designed to support countries in moving ahead with assessment of gaps in the institutional application of each of the 11 principles of effective governance at all levels.<sup>1</sup> Government-led assessments initiated at the workshop could serve as a precursor to more specific in-depth reviews, as appropriate, and/or lead directly to formulation of Government-led reform policies in priority institution-building areas. The workshop also aimed to foster policy coherence by encouraging alignment of institution-building efforts related to the 2030 Agenda with the Agenda 2063 objectives of the African Union.
- An important outcome to that end was agreement by the organizers to begin work on a baseline study on the status of the application of the principles across Africa. One approach to such a study could be to conduct a survey of adherence to the principles in

---

<sup>1</sup> See [https://publicadministration.un.org/africa\\_regional\\_workshop/](https://publicadministration.un.org/africa_regional_workshop/).

the public sector and report on the findings. Some important questions arise regarding the selection of indicators, administrative levels within countries and units of analysis (e.g., branches of government, jurisdictions, institutions or individual agencies). In addition, the study could provide an opportunity to consider how different existing tools and initiatives relate to one another and/or what the added value would be of a survey of application of the 11 principles by countries, especially with respect to implementation of the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063.

**What are some good practices in implementing the provisions of General Assembly resolution 72/305?**

- Recognize that building a strong ECOSOC system should not be seen as a technocratic efficiency exercise.
- Placing the work of ECOSOC within the context of the 2030 Agenda provides a useful point of reference for all entities in the system.
- Silo-thinking at all levels is hampering the holistic implementation of the SDGs, including cross-cutting challenges such promoting effective governance for sustainable development, addressing inequalities and leaving no one behind.

**What are your ideas for improving the visibility of the important work of your subsidiary body?**

- Noting that the VNR presentations during the HLPF may not always allow sufficient time to discuss all aspects of SDG implementation in depth, CEPA has initiated the practice of inviting interested VNR countries to engage in a dialogue directly with the experts on institutional aspects of SDG 16 during the Committee's annual session.
- For the upcoming 19<sup>th</sup> session of CEPA, we have invited 10 countries from across the 5 UN regions to engage in the VNR process and we will be engaging 3 questions relating to the SDG 16.
- CEPA members have also engaged with Government officials in informal VNR labs on issues related to institutions during HLPF.
- The Bureau of CEPA makes itself available to participate in meetings of ECOSOC as appropriate.

**How have the working methods of subsidiary bodies evolved to respond to efforts to strengthen the Economic and Social Council? Are there plans for further improvements in working methods of subsidiary bodies?**

- CEPA has placed the 2030 Agenda at the centre of its work. In examining institutional aspects of SDG 16, the Committee considers linkages with all SDGs and stresses that building effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels is both a Goal in itself and enabler of implementation of all SDGs.
- CEPA takes an action-oriented approach as reflected in its work on principles of effective governance for sustainable development and commonly used strategies for their operationalization.

- CEPA will continue to act on the Council's encouragement to continue to identify and review related technical guidelines to operationalize the principles, including from sectoral perspectives, and to engage the relevant United Nations organizations, regional organizations and professional and academic communities in this regard, in an inclusive manner, together with all relevant stakeholders.
- CEPA supports engagement of civil society organizations, regional organizations and other relevant stakeholders by inviting a wide range of observers to its annual session. Observers are invited to participate in the deliberations while giving precedence to the expert members of the Committee.
- The Bureau continues to explore other modalities of engagement. CEPA has included ongoing review of working methods in the programme of its annual session.

### **3. Recommendations for themes for ECOSOC and HLPF**

#### **Suggested question**

**In view of the Decade of Action and the work of the subsidiary bodies, what are your recommendations for possible future themes for the ECOSOC substantive session and the HLPF?**

- Future themes should arguably refer to global megatrends and the most pressing problems calling for a global action.
- Themes could also refer to core aspirations of the 2030 Agenda, not least balancing of the economic, social and environmental dimensions of sustainable development, and transformative action at all levels to reduce inequalities and leave no one behind.