

**Deputy Secretary-General**

**Message on the occasion of the**

**ECOSOC Informal Briefing “Joining Forces: Effective Policy  
Solutions for Covid-19 Response”**

**Virtual Meeting, 11 May 2020, 10:00 am - 12:00 pm**

**Your Excellency Amb. Mona Juul, President of ECOSOC,  
Excellencies,**

**Dear colleagues,**

**Thank you for organizing this important briefing.**

**More than ever, people and countries everywhere rely on the United Nations to rise to the challenges of this global pandemic – a human crisis.**

**Facing a crisis of such historic magnitude, our collective response must be equally historic, quick and decisive. Lives and livelihoods everywhere depend on our ability to better support your Governments as they tackle an unprecedented health, humanitarian and socio-economic crisis.**

**Since the start of the pandemic, we have mobilized the full capacity of the United Nations system in countries, through our 131 country teams, to immediately support national authorities in developing public health preparedness and response plans.**

**Recently, the United Nations Sustainable Development Group launched a United Nations global framework for the immediate socio-economic response to COVID-19,**

**complementing the UN health response, led by WHO, as well as the humanitarian response detailed in the COVID-19 Global Humanitarian Response Plan.**

**Across our set of responses, we have a clear compass. We remain guided by the 2030 Agenda, the Paris Agreement on Climate Change, and the Addis Ababa Action Agenda on Financing for Development.**

**The Sustainable Development Goals remain central to guiding countries on a sustainable track.**

**As the Secretary-General has highlighted, it is in fact the unfinished business in achieving the Millennium Development Goals and inadequate investments in our SDG priorities that have made so many countries - across every continent - so vulnerable to this crisis.**

**In this context, we will need to keep in mind dual imperatives: to respond urgently to stem the impact of the pandemic, while helping Governments and people respond in a way that recovers better, more resilient, future.**

**Drawing lessons learned from previous crises and leveraging our ability to work effectively together from the**

**UN reform, we have placed all assets of the UN development system in service of countries. Our response reflects:**

- **An integrated and coordinated UN offer under the leadership of the strengthened Resident Coordinator system;**
- **Policy expertise from across the system to support Governments with the difficult trade-offs needed to help sustain progress over time without deepening economic and social instability and environmental degradation;**
- **Established and new modalities for rapid funding of COVID-19 related programmes in countries; and**
- **Stronger partnerships with International Financial Institutions, civil society organizations, the private sector, academia and the scientific community;**

**We are all in it together. But our immediate priority is to address the needs of the most vulnerable countries and communities who risk being left behind.**

**Allocation of our resources will pay close attention to the needs of conflict- and disaster-affected countries, Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States.**

**Additional concessional resources for vulnerable countries, a new debt relief programme for all forms of debt as well as comprehensive and faster mechanisms to restructure debt to facilitate economic recovery and SDG achievement in developing countries are critical.**

**Measures to protect and stimulate the economy, from cash transfers to credits and loans, must be targeted at women who make up the majority of those in the hardest-hit informal economy, and who are at the forefront of the community response. We must also ensure we include children, persons with disabilities and the elderly.**

**Equal access to information, testing, health care, food, and other essential services must be ensured for migrants, IDPs and refugees who are often excluded from social protection measures, and risk being detained or deported if they seek help.**

**The needs and rights of indigenous people must also be upheld as they already experience significantly higher rates of communicable and non-communicable diseases, lack of access to essential services, and growing food insecurity.**

**This crisis reminds us of the intimate relationship between humans, animals and the environment. We must urgently address climate change, avoid habitat loss and**

**fragmentation, reverse the loss of biodiversity, reduce pollution and improve waste management and infrastructure.**

**Excellencies,**

**The United Nations is leveraging the recent reform efforts to provide you with the integrated, efficient and transparent support you had been calling for.**

**And early results show the tangible impacts of UNCTs joint work in countries.**

**In Ghana, the UNCT re-programmed existing resources to help tackle the health, humanitarian and socio-economic impacts of COVID-19, with complementary actions taken by various entities under the leadership of the RC. UNDP is supporting the Government to measure the impacts of COVID-19 on the economy and lead a UNCT-plan to boost livelihoods. UNFPA helped establish a 24/7 hotline to respond to gender-based violence. WFP is supporting the government in monitoring food prices. UNICEF is leading a partnership to open up testing laboratories at the sub-national level, while working with the Government to advance payments for 322,000 households.**

**In Nepal, the UNCT is supporting the Government to set up two call centers to address questions about COVID-19**

**prevention, attention and care. The Resident Coordinator has been leading a communications and community engagement strategy with UNICEF and WHO, with broad dissemination and engagement. The UNCT is rolling out messages against rumours and disinformation, stigma of COVID-19 patients and families, as well as domestic violence prevention, using innovative tools to reach distant communities via mobile phones.**

**In Cameroon, 14 agencies have helped develop a country prevention and response plan to support national priorities in tackling the immediate health needs. The UNCT is also working with the Government to analyze the impact of the crisis on the local economy, creating a joint basket of funds to boost livelihoods and lift vulnerable communities. UN Women engaged religious leaders, women and youth organizations, while also providing essential supplies for women in vulnerable communities. UNICEF worked with local authorities to install hand-washing stations and provide face masks to vulnerable groups. On the humanitarian response, the UN added \$100 million to its ongoing operations to support the COVID-19 response, which includes training for community health workers in refugee camps.**

**Excellencies,**

**COVID-19 knows no borders. And our response must show borderless solidarity.**

**The Secretary-General established the COVID-19 Response and Recovery Fund in early April to help catalyze joint action by UNCTs to support the most vulnerable countries and communities.**

**I thank those Member States who stepped up immediately to provide over USD 52 million, a large proportion of which will be immediately disbursed for the implementation of essential projects for COVID-19 response. On 15 April, the Fund issued its first Call for proposals to 47 particularly vulnerable countries.**

**Greater mobilization and international support are needed, however. We estimated billions and are receiving millions.**

**Excellencies,**

**Throughout our response, the guiding reference will remain the 2030 Agenda and its central promise to leave no one behind.**

**You can count on our full commitment to support your Governments and ensure that lives are saved, livelihoods are restored, financial resources are mobilized, and that the**



**global economy and the people we serve can emerge stronger from this crisis.**

**Thank you.**

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