

# Talking points for H.E. Ambassador Lachezara Stoeva, Vice-President of the Economic and Social Council (Bulgaria), for the launch of the informal consultations on the review of the work of ECOSOC subsidiary bodies

21 April 2022

## Background

1. The GA mandated review of the work of the subsidiary bodies in [resolution 75/290 A](#). The President of the Council, Ambassador Collen Kelapile, designated me to lead the process on behalf of the Bureau of ECOSOC.
2. The review process started in the final months of 2021, when I started my engagement with the Chairs of the functional commissions and expert bodies. The review will apply to these subsidiary bodies of ECOSOC. There are 17 of them: 8 functional commissions and 9 expert bodies.
3. This already provides a window to the diversity of the subsidiary bodies, which have specified mandates, memberships and working methods. This is well conveyed in the INF document published in 2019 on the subsidiary bodies of ECOSOC ([E/2019/INF/3](#)).
4. The Council is entrusted to oversee, guide and coordinate the work of its subsidiary bodies. General Assembly resolution 75/290 A aimed to strengthen this role.

## Mandate for the review

5. This resolution invited “the President and Bureau of the Economic and Social Council to work with the bureaux of its subsidiary bodies and in consultation with delegations during the 2022 session of the Council, so as to identify possible actions to be taken to implement the provisions of paragraphs 28 and 29 of the Annex to General Assembly resolution 72/305”.
6. According to these paragraphs, the Economic and Social Council should request its subsidiary bodies to ensure that they best support the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the work of the Council. Their work should reflect the need for an integrated and action-oriented approach to the Sustainable Development Goals. Their recommendations should build on a solid evidence-based review of progress on the 2030 Agenda and of the outcomes of conferences and summits in their respective area. They should work in an efficient, effective, transparent and inclusive manner. ECOSOC should also review the work of its subsidiary bodies with a view to ensuring their continued relevance. It will also ensure that they produce technical and expert analysis, assessments and policy recommendations to

inform the integrated view of the Council and inform efforts to implement the 2030 Agenda. It should effectively integrate the outcomes of its subsidiary bodies into its own work.

7. The discussions of the [2022 Coordination Segment](#) were also very timely and the suggestions made during the Segment can feed into the review process. The support materials prepared by the secretariat for the Segment, in particular the [SDG mapping](#), also constitute support material for this review. They have accordingly been included in my analysis when appropriate.

### Process for the review

8. I asked the chairs and bureaux of subsidiary to send me an assessment of the work of their subsidiary bodies ten days after their 2022 session. Based on the provisions of paragraphs 28 and 29 of resolution 72/305, as well as on the feedback received by the chairs, I shared questions with the Chairs of the functional commissions and expert bodies [on 3 February 2022](#) which served as a basis for the assessments by these bodies.
9. The questions do not make reference only to the current sessions; rather. They relate to long-standing views that Member States have expressed. The Bureaux were therefore encouraged to prepare their assessments taking into consideration their latest session as well as their previous experience while working with these bodies. I encouraged them to reach out to their respective memberships to the extent possible to collect their views as well.
10. The subsidiary bodies that are reviewing their methods of work during the current session were invited to align their reviews with this review process mandated in GA resolution 75/290 A in a way that it would reflect that we are all working towards the same goals, while conserving the particular ways of working of the different bodies.
11. As of 18 April 2022, 13 assessments had been received, which fed directly into the non-paper shared with you. Additional assessments will be provided as they are received, to continue informing our consultations.<sup>1</sup> You can find the [compilation of the assessments](#) on the ECOSOC subsidiary bodies [website](#).
12. I would like to take a moment to thank the Bureaux of the functional commissions and expert bodies and the focal points they have nominated for this review. They have shown commitment to the process as well as to their mandates, including the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs. I have gained important insights from my exchanges with them and I see how it could be beneficial for Member States to engage more closely with the Council's subsidiary bodies. I hope the process we are launching here today will put us on that path. I also hope that it

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<sup>1</sup> The assessments not yet received are: [Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights](#) (71<sup>st</sup> session: 14 February- 4 March); [Committee of Experts on International Cooperation in Tax Matters](#) (24<sup>th</sup> session: 4-12 April); [Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues](#) (21<sup>st</sup> session: 25 April- 6 May); [United Nations Forum on Forests](#) (17<sup>th</sup> session: 9-13 May).

can leave to meaningful measures to further enhance the work of the subsidiary bodies and its impact, building on their achievements and lessons learned.

13. The non-paper I shared with you reflects first a summary of the assessments received from bureaux. Second, it contains conclusions and recommendations emanating from those assessments, the Coordination Segment and my own analysis as facilitator. Let me now turn to a brief overview of the assessments and my conclusions and recommendations.
14. I will highlight four points that were addressed in the questions supporting the assessment of the work of the subsidiary bodies. They aim to capture the main dimensions of the mandates of the General Assembly for the review of the work of subsidiary bodies. They relate to alignment with the 2030 Agenda, methods of work, cooperation among subsidiary bodies and maximizing the use by ECOSOC of the outcomes of its subsidiary bodies.
15. The first point we are to address is:

#### Alignment of the work of ECOSOC subsidiary bodies with the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs

16. **The assessments by the Bureaux** of functional commissions and expert bodies indicate that all subsidiary bodies work towards the 2030 Agenda while performing their mandated activities such as ensuring follow-up and review of specific conferences and summits entrusted to them.
17. In addition, the assessments discuss how the work of subsidiary bodies is overall supported by and/or produce expert analysis and evidence-based reviews of progress on the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and of the outcomes of conferences and summits within their respective mandates. This work is taking into consideration interlinkages among SDGs and sectoral areas. Functional commissions and expert bodies have also been working to support the recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic within their respective areas.
18. The functional commissions and expert bodies also provide inputs to the thematic review of the High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF) as mandated by the 2030 Agenda. A few subsidiary bodies are increasingly engaging in supporting the HLPF voluntary national reviews.
19. **In my analysis**, I highlighted that most subsidiary bodies could benefit from specific guidance from the Council on which areas of the 2030 Agenda to address from their respective angles, while avoiding one-size-fits-all approaches.
20. **In this context, I suggest that the Council could consider:**
  - a. **Recommending that the Commission for Social Development regularly consider progress in achieving SDG 10 on inequality and related policies, as also recommended by the General Assembly**
  - b. **Recommending that gender equality and the empowerment of women to be addressed by all subsidiary bodies.**

- c. **Recommending that subsidiary bodies reflect on the interlinkages of SDG 13 on climate change with the issues within their purview** and how their policy recommendation can contribute to climate action.

21. The second point the GA asked us to address is on:

#### Working methods of subsidiary bodies:

22. **The Bureaux** of the functional commissions and expert bodies share how their respective bodies ensure that they produce expert and evidence-based work. This starts with the preparation for their sessions, which includes intersessional meetings or preparatory expert group meetings.<sup>2</sup> The resulting expert analyses and evidence-based reviews are reflected in official or informal documents for the session and support the discussions during the sessions and the elaboration of outcome documents.
23. Outcomes include resolutions providing policy recommendations to enable the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and outcomes of UN conferences or internationally agreed conventions followed up by subsidiary bodies of the Council.
24. Other outcomes, notably for expert bodies, include manuals, guidance notes, model regulations, international legal instruments and codes, normative frameworks, principles and methods, which benefit from the knowledge of the expert members of these bodies and are endorsed by the Council.
25. In terms of best practices, the Bureaux highlight the importance of:
  - a. Regular engagement with Member States, for example through regular briefings.
  - b. Ensuring that a diversity of views is reflected in the deliberations and related preparatory processes of their sessions, open and transparent processes to review their working methods and/or terms of reference.
  - c. A consensus-based approach.
  - d. Working through Sub-groups or working groups to address specific aspects of their work, which allow members to use their particular expertise.
  - e. Using information and communication technologies to adjust to the impact of COVID-19 on their working methods.
  - f. Having an agenda item to address the main theme of ECOSOC and the HLPF, to allow for alignment with the latter given the difference in the timing and periodicity of the adoption of the main theme of the Council and the HLPF and that of the subsidiary bodies.
26. Some subsidiary bodies' bureaux note with concern that the allocated Regular Budget resources have not grown commensurate with the increased number of mandates. They

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<sup>2</sup> A detailed account is given in the original assessments sent by the Bureaux.

mention that it would be important to draw the attention of Member States to the possible consequences for the implementation of mandates arising from this situation.

27. **In my analysis**, I emphasized how tapping on the expertise of subsidiary bodies in addressing interlinkages among the SDGs could maximize the impacts of ECOSOC's work in bringing about transformative policies to advance the implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

28. **In this context, the Council could consider:**

- a. **Encouraging subsidiary bodies to further deepen their focus on interlinkages across the SDGs and sectors under their purview and make recommendations that build on synergies and address trade-offs across such areas.**
- b. **Providing further specific guidance to its subsidiary bodies to enhance coordination and exchanges so as to support the elaboration of integrated policy approaches, building on the interlinkages among the SDGs.**
- c. **Calling on all subsidiary bodies to consider mainstreaming the consideration of an issue in their work, in case this is recommended by another subsidiary body.**
- d. **Suggesting that, while most of the subsidiary bodies engage a range of stakeholders in their work, subsidiary bodies further deepen and broaden stakeholder participation.**
- e. **Recommending that subsidiary bodies dedicate an agenda item to the theme of ECOSOC and the HLPF and to the interrelations between their own priority theme, where applicable, and the follow-up to the 2030 Agenda.**

29. This leads me to the third point addressed by assessments of subsidiary bodies:

#### Coordination and cooperation among subsidiary bodies

30. **Subsidiary bodies** show a significant interest in increasing cooperation among them and getting to know more about each other's work.

31. Cooperation among them has been increasing but they also recognize that it could be strengthened. There are several proposals put forward to do just this.

32. The Bureaux identified an integral role for ECOSOC to play in promoting collaboration among its subsidiary bodies and highlighting integrated policy approaches related to the theme of ECOSOC and the HLPF that emanate from the work of subsidiary bodies.

33. **In my analysis**, I highlighted how the Coordination Segment could be further utilized to provide additional guidance to the subsidiary bodies and discussed how the Council can further promote coordination of these bodies.

34. **In this context, the Council could consider:**

- a. **Providing guidance with a view to increasing cooperation and fostering interlinkages between the work of the different subsidiary bodies, in support of integrated policy approaches to address the theme of ECOSOC and the HLPF.**
- b. **Looking at the draft agendas of its subsidiary bodies in a holistic manner, rather than sequentially. This would require informal discussions between the ECOSOC Bureau and Bureaux of subsidiary bodies ahead of the subsidiary bodies' sessions so as to shape the agendas in a consultative fashion, while respecting the expertise of subsidiary bodies.**
- c. **Ensuring that functional commissions address a specific, focused and well delineated theme, rather than a broad general theme, which could lead to more practical guidance and maximize the impact of their work.**
- d. **Clarifying the respective roles of subsidiary bodies and ECOSOC forums working on similar issues, where needed.**
- e. **Encouraging procedures and practices that, while not reopening discussions held in other fora, help subsidiary bodies to draw from each other's work so as to promote integrated policy approaches.**
- f. **Monitoring the coordinated follow up of the Ministerial Declaration of ECOSOC and the HLPF by subsidiary bodies at the Coordination Segment.**
- g. **Further raising awareness about the work of its subsidiary bodies headquartered away from New York and encouraging other subsidiary bodies to consider drawing more systematically on their outcomes.**

35. The fourth and last point we need to reflect on is on:

Leveraging the work of the Subsidiary Bodies -- How ECOSOC can best use the outcomes of subsidiary bodies

- 36. **The Bureaux** noted that the adoption of the main theme of ECOSOC and the HLPF by the General Assembly with sufficient lead time would be helpful, as it would allow subsidiary bodies to better contribute to this work.
- 37. One other suggestion was to circulate information related to the Council, its meetings and processes to membership of subsidiary bodies in a timely manner, particularly those bodies headquartered away from New York, to ensure meaningful input from them.
- 38. Importantly, there is a strong call from the Bureaux for featuring and using more effectively the outcomes of the subsidiary bodies in the work of the Council and the HLPF, particularly by:
  - a. Including key recommendations from their negotiated and other outcomes in ECOSOC and HLPF outcome documents, in particular the Ministerial Declaration.

- b. Disseminating the outcomes of subsidiary bodies and actively promoting the implementation, so that they inform policy making and capacity building by the UN system and other actors.
  - c. Monitoring more effectively the follow-up to the outcomes of the subsidiary bodies.
  - d. Inviting Chairs of subsidiary bodies as panelists in ECOSOC segments and meetings and in the HLPF.
  - e. Organizing one pilot meeting on a specific theme during the 2023 session of the Council, with participation of the entire membership and featuring several relevant subsidiary bodies.
  - f. Holding more regular meetings between the ECOSOC Bureau and subsidiary bodies' Chairs, to institutionalize substantive exchanges and promote integrated approaches in the deliberations of the Council.
39. **In my analysis**, I emphasized the importance of increasing the engagement of Member States in the work of the Council and its subsidiary bodies in order to leverage the work of these bodies as well as to make them more responsive to Member States' needs, in particular in terms of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda.
40. **Member States could request the functional commissions and expert bodies to address the gaps in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda at the national or regional level which require support or advice of the international community. This would encourage a demand driven approach to the work of the subsidiary bodies.**
41. **More meaningful engagement from Member States in subsidiary bodies would also contribute to reducing duplication and avoiding creating additional structures to carry out work that fall under the purview of the mandates of the subsidiary bodies of the Council and can thus be easily carried out by them. This point was made at the Coordination Segment.**
42. **Furthermore, the Council could consider:**
- a. **Inviting more systematically the Chairs of subsidiary bodies to participate in round table discussions during the ECOSOC session, as done in 2022.**
  - b. **Ensuring that HLPF likewise draw more systematically from the inputs of ECOSOC subsidiary bodies for conducting its thematic reviews.**
  - c. **Recommend that functional commissions and expert bodies could more systematically invite countries conducting Voluntary National Reviews at the HLPF to participate in their session and engage in a dialogue on the implementation of the SDGs most closely related to their work. This would help to maximize peer learning on policy experiences emanating from the VNRs.**

- d. Dedicating part of its operational activities segment to examining critical outcomes of subsidiary bodies that require follow-up at country level.**
- e. Encouraging the participation of Chairs of subsidiary bodies in the governing bodies of UN system entities, so that governing bodies consider whether they need to take follow-up action.**

#### Outcome and conclusion

- 43. To conclude, I hope that the assessment of the work of subsidiary bodies and the proposed conclusions and recommendations I just shared will assist you in finalizing the review of subsidiary bodies.
- 44. The non-paper is a living document, and we will include other assessments as they are received from subsidiary bodies which are yet to hold their sessions.
- 45. In my roadmap, I suggested that we dedicate one session of informal consultations on 29 April to Thematic cluster I, “Aligning with the 2030 Agenda” and Thematic cluster II, “Working methods, including expert nature of reports and outcomes”.
- 46. On 9 May, we could review Thematic cluster III, “Coordination issues among subsidiary bodies, areas for synergies possible duplications and gaps” and Thematic cluster IV, “How ECOSOC can best use outcomes of subsidiary bodies” (based on the relevant section of the bureau’s paper).
- 47. I aim to complete the review by 20 May 2022, so that the Management segment on 8 and 9 June can be briefed on the outcome of the review and consider any action that may be needed.
- 48. I should underline that the General Assembly did not specify the format of the outcome of the review of the work of subsidiary bodies. I believe that we will see what its shape should be as we proceed through our discussions and consultations. Form should follow content.
- 49. There are various options that we will discuss at the end of the process. They range from a President summary with recommendations to be shared with bureaux of subsidiary bodies - - to more formal outcomes such as a resolution or decision. I have no preconceived ideas. Except that we must see how much we can achieve in the limited time we have. We should also come up with clear practical and actionable conclusions, so we should be mindful of this if you decide to go for a negotiated text. I am in your hands.
- 50. The informal consultations will use my non-paper as a basis. But I also look forward to hearing your own assessment and views on the work of subsidiary bodies.
- 51. We will need to stay strictly within our mandate which is ensuring the alignment of the work of subsidiary bodies with the 2030 Agenda and introducing any improvement in their working methods and cooperation as well as in the consideration by ECOSOC of their outcomes. Please bear in mind that we are not mandated to review the mandate or terms of reference of subsidiary bodies.



52. Before I end, I should underscore that the assessments I received demonstrate the huge breadth and depth of the work of ECOSOC subsidiary bodies and its usefulness to the international community. Using and enhancing further this work is part of a renewed multilateralism attuned to addressing the major challenges we face, while keeping the focus on the 2030 Agenda. We should not miss the opportunity offered by this review.
53. We should manage our expectations however. Any step to increase the focus on innovative ways to implement the 2030 Agenda and increase the impact of the work of subsidiary bodies, regardless how small it is, will matter for advancing towards the SDGs.
54. It is clear that, following this review, the dialogue between ECOSOC and its functional commissions and expert bodies should continue. This can be done through regular meetings with the Chairs and maintaining the network of focal points we created for carrying out this review.
55. I look forward to your views today and at the next informal consultations.
56. We will capture them in a brief summary and discuss later how we use it.
57. Thank you.

29 April 2022 [10am – 1pm ECOSOC Chamber]	<b>Informal consultations</b> on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Thematic cluster I</b>, “Aligning with the 2030 Agenda” (based on the relevant section of the bureau’s paper), and</li> <li>• <b>Thematic cluster II</b>, “Working methods, including expert nature of reports and outcomes, ensuring continuity in the work, etc” (based on the relevant section of the bureau’s paper).</li> </ul>
9 May 2022 [10am – 1pm ECOSOC Chamber]	<b>Informal consultations</b> on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Thematic cluster III</b>, “Coordination issues among subsidiary bodies, areas for synergies possible duplications and gaps” (based on the relevant section of the bureau’s paper), and</li> <li>• <b>Thematic cluster IV</b>, “How ECOSOC can best use outcomes of subsidiary bodies” (based on the relevant section of the bureau’s paper).</li> </ul>
By 20 May 2022	<b>Finalization of the outcome</b> of the review.
8-9 June 2022	<b><u>Management Segment</u></b> meetings, where the <b>outcome</b> of the review <b>would be considered</b> .