



**ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL  
Integration Segment**

**Sustainable and resilient recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic that promotes the economic, social and environmental dimensions of sustainable development: Building an inclusive and effective path for the achievement of the 2030 Agenda in the context of the decade of action and delivery for sustainable development**

**Presentation of the Annual Overview Report for 2020 of the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination (CEB)**

**Simona Petrova, Secretary, CEB**

Mister Vice-President,  
Excellencies,  
Distinguished Delegates,

Thank you for the opportunity to present, on behalf of the Secretary-General, highlights from the Annual Overview Report for 2020 of the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination (CEB) (E/2021/47) and provide a snapshot of recent system-wide cooperation.

Under the Secretary-General's chairmanship, the Board has been providing forward-looking guidance and serving as a driver of integration and coherence to support action and mandate implementation across the system in support of Member States. The Board serves as an internal "think-tank", providing high-level system-wide strategic guidance, coherent leadership, enhanced cooperation and forward-looking solutions in response to mandates stemming from the legislative and governing bodies of 31 its member organizations. All this, while also aiming at fostering systemic transformation through change focused on providing better data, analysis and communications; innovation and digital transformation; strategic foresight; stronger performance and results orientation; and a work culture that

reduces unnecessary bureaucracy, and simplifies and fosters collaboration in support of the Secretary-General's vision of a United Nations 2.0.

In 2020, as the world confronted a challenge of dramatic scale and impact, with ramifications for generations to come, the Board channelled its efforts and focus on the response to and recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic. The United Nations family continued to place sustainable development at the core of the recovery to make the world more resilient to future threats and steered the respective organizations' resources towards collective efforts.

CEB, as a unique high-level forum, continued to serve as a strategic policy space and a driver of integration and coherence for the system in 2020, and as a platform for the Executive Heads to discuss ways to reconcile urgent short-term financial needs resulting from the COVID-19 crisis with longer-term recovery objectives and their impact on the timely achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in this Decade of Action.

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Essential to accelerate progress towards achieving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is the availability of high-quality, timely, disaggregated, and open data and statistics. The System-wide Road Map for Innovating UN Data and Statistics (*CEB/2020/1/Add.1*), developed in consultation with the High-level Committee on Programmes (HLCP) by the Committee of the Chief Statisticians of the UN System was endorsed by the Board in May 2020 in recognition of the critical role of the system in ensuring the accessibility and timely availability of United Nations' data.

As laid bare by the pandemic, the world at large remains highly vulnerable to and dependent on our natural environment. In order to maintain the momentum of the 2020 "super year" for nature and beyond, CEB considered how it could best support Member States to set in motion systemic changes towards nature-positive shifts across sectors, and develop shared and strong system-wide commitment and narrative on halting, restoring and reversing the current trajectory of nature loss and climate change, to provide a significant "lift" of the nature agenda. This resulted in the development through HLCP of a common approach to integrating biodiversity for sustainable development into the United Nations policy

and programme planning and delivery (*forthcoming as CEB/2021/1/Add.1*), which was endorsed by CEB at its most recent session, held virtually on 4 May 2021. Through this Common Approach, the UN system commits to mainstream biodiversity and catalyze collective action to address the drivers of biodiversity loss, restore ecosystems and ultimately contribute to life in harmony with nature.

The pandemic continues to challenge the United Nations system and its operations and has forced our staff at large to radically shift their ways of working overnight.

As part of the institutional response to the pandemic, the High-level Committee on Management (HLCM), performed a crucial role as the top management coordination mechanism for the UN system. Through its functional networks – on human resources, technology, procurement, and finance and budget – it focused on preserving the system’s ability to deliver on programmatic mandates and ensuring that staff remained safe, physically and psychologically. Throughout the pandemic HLCM has been leading the development of and updates to administrative guidelines for the use of the entire system on key business continuity matters.

The pandemic further demonstrated the value and accelerated the application of new tools, techniques and skills throughout the UN system. As it touched virtually all aspects of life in a deeply interconnected way, the pandemic reinforced the power of applying systems thinking and using integrated responses to enhance the ability to anticipate and respond to risk, both in the operational and management practices of the UN system as well as its programmatic work. CEB member organizations ramped up collaboration and are strengthening capacities to better equip their staff to address volatile, complex challenges – both external and internal – and continuously improve working methods.

One example of work in progress with great potential is the pilot initiative on using predictive analytics in the Sahel, spearheaded by UNHCR in 2020 through HLCP. The project seeks to increase the availability of high-quality data and to develop predictive models that show where risk hotspots are likely to emerge in the Sahel, particularly how climate change and disasters may contribute to new or exacerbated risks in these areas. This project supports UNISS/UNOWAS, and particularly the work of the Special Coordinator for Development, in promoting data-driven and evidence-based analyses and

programming as foundations for convening and aligning with national, regional and international partners.

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Described by the Secretary-General as the defining challenge of our time, reducing inequalities was already facing major obstacles which has been further exacerbated by the pandemic. To this end HLCP continued to effectively leverage knowledge residing across the UN system to facilitate agile action on rapidly emerging issues in support of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Decade of Action, offering high-level thought leadership for bold action to help lead Member States out of crisis mode and towards transformed economies and more equitable, gender-just societies. One example of such products was the November 2020 CEB call to action on building an inclusive, sustainable and resilient future with indigenous peoples (*CEB/2020/2/Add.1/Rev.1*), developed as part of a broader concerted effort to strengthen the UN system's collective engagement, visibility and impact on reducing inequalities. The HLCP Inequalities Task Team also developed a specific Policy Brief "COVID-19, inequalities and building back better" advocating for comprehensive and coherent action to combat inequalities at all levels.

Building on the recognition that artificial intelligence (AI) has great potential to transform societies as well as contribute to the SDGs, HLCP continued to build on its recent work on data, innovation, and frontier technologies, including providing system-wide inputs to the draft recommendation on a possible standard-setting instrument on the ethics of AI, being considered by UNESCO's General Conference. The Committee also established an Inter-agency Working Group on Artificial Intelligence, co-led by UNESCO and ITU, which is leveraging HLCP's ongoing work on AI as well as the Secretary-General's Roadmap for Digital Cooperation to enhance United Nations system-wide coordination and policy coherence on this topic. These efforts are a response to paragraph 6 of General Assembly resolution 73/17 on the impact of rapid technological change on the achievement of the Goals and targets, in which the Secretary-General was invited to bring to the attention of CEB the importance for United Nations entities to take the issue into consideration. The focus of CEB and its High-level Committees will continue to be on the social, economic and environmental implications of rapidly developing technologies, their ability to contribute to accelerating achievement of the SDGs; and

the role of the UN system in supporting Member States, in particular the least developed, to harness the benefits of new technologies while addressing the risks and minimizing destabilizing effects.

As mandated by the General Assembly (A/RES/75/227), in 2020 CEB continued to support the coordination of and follow-up to the implementation of the Istanbul Programme of Action (IPoA) for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2011–2020 on a system-wide basis as well as to enhance UN system support for investment promotion regimes for LDCs, through regular reporting to the High-level Committee on Programmes.

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The Board will continue to provide leadership, solutions and hope in the coming months and years to help the global community build more inclusive, just, resilient, and sustainable societies and economies. As stated by the Secretary-General in his Oath of Office in June 2021 “The pandemic has revealed our shared vulnerability, our inter-connectedness and the absolute need for collective action. We feel a new momentum everywhere for an unequivocal commitment to come together to chart a course towards a better future.” This is at the core of what drives CEB and its High-level Committees and will continue to steer their direction as we advance in the recovery from the pandemic and in the implementation of the Decade of Action.

I trust that the Annual Overview Report before you demonstrates how CEB, during the reporting year, served as a driver of integration and coherence in the UN system across a wide range of programmatic and management issues in support of intergovernmental mandates and priorities through timely and integrated follow-up to Member States’ directives.

I thank you for this opportunity to brief the Council.