

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

75th meeting of the UN Economic and Social Council

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

Panel 1: Institutional strengthening, governance, inclusion and the rule of law

Statement by Michelle Bachelet, UN High Commissioner for Human Rights

2 July 2021

Distinguished Chair and Vice-President of ECOSOC,

Fellow panellists,

Excellencies,

I welcome the opportunity to share the expertise of my Office on how – and why – we should work to strengthen governance and institutions for greater inclusion, and a more fair recovery, at this crucial time for the well-being of our peoples and planet.

Rarely has the world faced such a cascade of human rights setbacks and threats. Like a tsunami that follows an earthquake, a devastating socio-economic recession has been generated by the pandemic of COVID-19.

Today, the profound unfairness of unequal access to vaccines, together with underlying failures to invest in human rights-based protections, are driving the growing prospect of **vastly divergent recoveries**. This is a turning point: a generational opportunity to depart from models that have generated inequalities and fragility, and steer our world towards a more inclusive future.

We need to help rebuild public trust within societies where marginalization and injustice are dangerously eroding cohesion and stability.

We need solid systems that effectively deliver access to health-care, social protections, decent work, clean water, shelter and other fundamental rights that help keep everyone safe.

Human rights norms are powerful tools to **rebuild the credibility of institutions**. In line with [Sustainable Development Goal 16](#), the human rights framework binds States to ensure that institutions are **accountable, participatory, inclusive, and provide pathways for everyone to claim their rights**. Notably, to leave no one behind, public policies and laws should be guided by quality disaggregated data and the perspectives of disadvantaged groups.

The rights to freedom of speech, information and meaningful scrutiny; the broadest possible civic space; and the ability to peacefully protest form the vision of SDG 16.

Effective and independent national human rights institutions have a fundamental role in ensuring that human rights are made an intrinsic part of the socio-economic recovery in every country.

Transparency, participation and non-discrimination also need to be embedded in the governance of public resources— particularly in a context such as today's, when shrinking fiscal resources, combined with growing need for social spending, create difficult trade-offs in public decision-making.

The best investment a country can make is to allocate public money to realizing human rights. This may mean pursuing progressive taxation and redirecting resources to marginalized groups to reduce inequalities.

Excellencies,

The past 18 months have amply demonstrated that human rights make us safer and stronger – notably, that social protection measures reduce exclusion and maintain a functioning economy. They enabled people to stay alive and meet basic rights. That is the essence of the right to social security: loss of income or illness should not lead to destitution.

I encourage all States to establish universal systems for social protection and for health – and to institutionalize them for the long-term.

We must learn from this pandemic that advancing human rights is not only the right thing to do. It is the smart thing to do. As the world's platform for guidance and advancement of development in all its dimensions, I welcome ECOSOC's support in leading these efforts.

Thank you