



ECOSOC 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

2 July 2021, Hybrid Format

ECOSOC VICE-PRESIDENT'S SUMMARY

The 2021 [Integration Segment](#), chaired by H.E. Mr. Juan Sandoval Mendiola, Vice-President of the Economic and Social Council (Mexico), took place on 2 July. The Segment brought together key messages from ECOSOC subsidiary bodies and the UN system on the main theme of the Council and the high-level political forum on sustainable development (HLPF), “*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.*” The Integration Segment built on the key messages and takeaways emanating from the three [Integration Dialogues](#), created by the ECOSOC Vice-president, Ambassador Juan Sandoval, as part of the preparatory process. The Segment explored innovative and ambitious policy responses that are likely to generate maximum impact across the SDGs while supporting efforts to recover from the COVID-19 pandemic and its effects.

In his remarks, the ECOSOC Vice-President called for a strengthened multilateralism and innovative approaches that promote coherence and integration to solve global challenges, including vaccine equity. He emphasized the need to prioritize the most vulnerable and marginalized groups of people in the recovery efforts. The ECOSOC Vice-President also underscored the need for the Council to foster deeper coordination among its functional commissions and expert bodies to avoid duplication, ensure coherence and promote synergies. The Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs, Mr. Liu Zhenmin, highlighted the urgency of ensuring fair, broad and equal access to vaccines and addressed existing crises that have been worsened by the pandemic, such as conflicts, disasters and climate issues. He reiterated the call for global solidarity during these crucial times to ensure that the world recovers better from the crisis and delivers on the promise of the 2030 Agenda.

Several Chairs of functional commissions and expert bodies of the Council, as well as Heads of specialized agencies and other representatives of the United Nations system, participated as panelists during the three interactive discussions; Chairs and members of Groups of Least Developed Countries (LDCs), Landlocked Developing Countries (LLDCs), the Like-Minded Group of Countries Supporters of Middle Income Countries, and the Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS) participated as lead discussants. The panels focused on “*Institutional strengthening, governance, inclusion and the rule of law*”, “*Building back better towards inclusive, sustainable, and just economies for recovery: Re-designing the contract between people and planet*”, and “*Human well-being and capabilities: Building back more resilient, healthy, equitable and sustainable societies*”.

Regain trust in institutions and strengthen the social contract.

The panelists and lead discussants emphasized the need for institutional reforms and a new social contract that rebuilds trust in institutions. A whole-of-government and whole-of-society approach is essential to build trust in institutions and break down silos. The pandemic provided an opportunity to rethink the development paradigm towards equality, resilience, and environmental sustainability to advance the 2030 Agenda.

Participants noted that the profound unequal access to vaccines, together with underlying failures to invest in human rights-based protections, are driving the growing prospect of vastly divergent recoveries. The COVID-19 vaccines have been administered in 215 countries, areas and territories. However, over 85.5% of them have gone to high-income or upper-middle-income countries, while low-income countries have received just 0.3%. 14.4% of doses have been administered in LICs/LMICs while representing 46.7% of the world's population. This kind of marginalization, which is only one example of many, is dangerously eroding cohesion and stability, prompting further distrust. Vaccine equity is essential for the recovery from the pandemic.

Leave no one unvaccinated, leave no one behind.

Panelists highlighted human rights norms as powerful tools in rebuilding the credibility of institutions. Some States are making visible progress towards institutions that are accountable, participatory, and inclusive, as outlined in SDG 16. Initial steps should incorporate quality disaggregated data and the perspectives of disadvantaged groups when crafting public policy. Transparency, participation, and non-discrimination also need to be embedded in the governance of public resources, particularly in today's context when shrinking fiscal resources, combined with growing need for social spending, create difficult trade-offs in public decision-making.

Eliminate inequalities. The pandemic revealed and exacerbated inequalities and has pushed between 119 and 124 million people into extreme poverty. Participants agreed that the pandemic exposed decades of underinvestment in public health services, social protection programmes and other areas. As a result, governments were not equipped to respond effectively and expeditiously to COVID-19, more critically in developing countries. The crucial role of adequate investments in public health systems, comprehensive social protection programmes including non-contributory universal schemes, wage subsidization and tax relief, decent work, housing (including a moratorium on evictions or mortgage bond foreclosures), food, water and sanitation systems, and institutions to advance gender equality is now at the forefront of international policy dialogues. Gender equality must be at the core of inclusive and accountable governance, including through temporary special measures and quotas to amplify women's voices, participation and leadership. More efficient, inclusive, resilient and sustainable agri-food systems were considered critical for more effective and sustainable production, better nutrition and protecting the environment. In this regard, strengthening rural women's economic empowerment was considered crucial to increase their access to resources and opportunities. Investing in green recovery of food systems will address both food security and climate risks, as well as all other SDGs in various degrees due to their integrated and interlinked nature.

Recovery with social progress.

Economic recovery must protect planet and people. Panelists discussed stimulus policy mixes that address these issues along with recovery while also working towards decarbonization, backing nature and tackling pollution. Although the need for such policies is more evident than ever, countries have yet to use the recovery as an opportunity to adopt them as part of their strategy to build back better and put them on a path towards the SDGs. In 2020, only 18% of recovery spending and 2.5% of total spending in 50 major economies had positive "green" characteristics. Participants highlighted five key areas of improvement in this regard. First, providing energy equity and connectivity while reducing greenhouse gas emissions and air pollution will prioritize clean and renewable energy alongside concerted efforts to improve energy efficiency. This will also require coordinated, whole-of-government policies promoting structural transformation towards more diverse and sustainable economic structures and energy matrices. Second, the promotion of electric and hybrid vehicles along with other methods of clean transportation will aid sustainability. Next, investing in green construction practices and retrofitting buildings for energy efficiency can help create jobs and improve living conditions while reducing carbon emissions. Fourth, ecosystem restoration is a critical priority that will help restore biodiversity and stave off climate disaster. Finally, investing in clean research and development will spur green innovation and solutions that support sustainable development and the 2030 Agenda.

The need to reframe the development paradigm towards equality, resilience and environmental sustainability was underscored. Panelists highlighted that recovery packages must integrate gender-responsive policy responses to create broad-based economic growth with decent work opportunities for all, while lowering the environmental footprint. They must also pursue universal health systems and other social safety nets to

Adopt a new, more equitable and sustainable development model.

reduce inequalities and poverty. Circular economy strategies were considered critical for sustainability and prosperity, while creating decent jobs. Accounting for nature – and social impacts – in all economic decisions can address key market failures in pricing externalities. In addition, panelists identified the need for countries to actively support the development of productive and human development capacities for structural transformations. The pandemic exposed the importance of flexibility and resilience in a rapidly changing industrial and technological context. Participants discussed the integral role of science, technology and innovation as well as the availability of high-quality data for finding solutions to complex challenges and for making informed decisions at all levels, including international, national and individual. Governments have a key role in reshaping public and private relations to produce economic systems where innovation and investment are geared towards meeting the needs of both the people and the planet.

Reduce the fragility of vulnerable countries.

This kind of transformation and the resulting inclusive, sustainable, and just global economy cannot exist without significantly increasing support for a sustainable and inclusive transformation of the economies of countries in special situations, including the LDCs, LLDCs, SIDS and debt-vulnerable middle-income countries. Global and multistakeholder partnerships must urgently be revitalized as an integral enabler of higher wellbeing, more prosperity and a better planet for everyone, everywhere. Participants highlighted that such international assistance and cooperation also includes provision of financial resources including addressing the debt crises as well as the sharing of research, medical equipment and supplies, and best practices in combating the virus along with coordinated action to reduce the economic and social impacts of the crisis. The needs of vulnerable and disadvantaged communities and fragile countries, including least developed countries and countries in conflict and post-conflict situations, should be at the centre of such international endeavors. Participants drew attention to the disproportionate impact the crisis is having on the most vulnerable. Income and wealth inequalities within and between countries are deepening and exacerbating the existing inequalities in the enjoyment of economic, social and cultural rights. There is an urgent need for multilateral support to secure the required policy space and support countries' endeavors to secure the kind of structural, sustainable transformation that will enable them to meet the SDGs, including by scaling up financial support and delivering effective debt relief, debt restructuring and liquidity assistance.

Recent multilateral efforts have helped reduce the development gap, such as the Hand-in-Hand Initiative, which uses data and modelling to help end poverty and hunger. Similar digital platforms such as the International Platform for Digital Food and Agriculture provides strategic policy recommendations based on the digitalization of information on food and agriculture while introducing key capabilities such as e-commerce to rural areas. Participants asked for stronger commitments to global partnerships for developing countries in key areas such as capacity-building for health and education sectors, digital infrastructure, science, technology and innovation capabilities, green industrial policies, and the diversification of economic and export structures.

The COVID-19 pandemic illustrated the increasing importance of science, technology, and innovation (STI) in our lives. STI enabled a number of key developments, from genome mapping to disease monitoring and the development of COVID-19 vaccines in less than a year, a process that typically takes a decade or longer. It also allowed many to work and learn from home. There can be no recovery without global digital connectivity, which is critical for the good functioning of our societies and economies. Promoting decent work that protect the climate requires ensuring just digital and ecological transitions. Investing in green recovery of food systems will address both food security and climate risks, as well as all other SDGs. Science, technology and innovation are important elements for transforming agri-food systems and advancing the implementation of the SDGs. Participants also referred to the 24th Commission on Science and Technology for Development (CSTD) which recommended more equitable access to scientific knowledge and technologies, including digital technologies, to close the gap on SDG 3, good health, and well-being. Participants highlighted the increasing role governments and the global community must play in assisting these developments and making sure that such innovations are used effectively and equitably by closing the digital divide. The contribution of ECOSOC STI Forum was also recognized.

Leave no one disconnected, achieve global digital connectivity.

Science, technology and innovation for a resilient recovery

Strengthening national innovation systems, promoting international cooperation and a commitment to global solidarity are critical enablers for ensuring that scientific knowledge and technologies, including digital and health care technologies, are accessible for all. Regulatory frameworks that enable the use of digital technologies, including in the health care sector, and establishing appropriate laws on data protection and privacy are also necessary. A whole-of-government and multi-sectoral approach is needed to ensure that STI policies are consistent with national priorities and sustainable development strategies. As witnessed during this pandemic, when the international community comes together, solutions can be found for global challenges in record time. Participants agreed that this is a critical juncture for bringing attention to other critical diseases and the development of affordable vaccines, treatments, and innovative delivery methods.

Reliable data.

Participants underscored the need for high-quality disaggregated data to make informed, evidence-based decisions, to design effective policies, to reach the most vulnerable groups and to ensure that no one is left behind. The power of geospatial information, or the critical value gained from combining and integrating ‘location-based’ data with many other data types, was highlighted. Geospatial information can bridge the digital data gap in many communities and sectors.

Participants concluded that the work of the Economic and Social Council is crucial as it takes a global, holistic approach to the COVID-19 pandemic response. The interlinked nature of the work of the Council and its subsidiary

Consolidate a new effective and deliberative ECOSOC.

bodies provides a powerful tool to produce coordinated, catalyzing, evidence-based policy guidance on sustainable development and accelerate progress towards the SDGs through the recovery of COVID-19. ECOSOC is in a prime position to oversee the transition into a new multilateralism that effectively responds to contemporary social, economic, and environmental needs and challenges. Global solidarity to achieve the 2030 Agenda will secure policy spaces that pursue national development strategies and enable effective global response to global challenges, of which COVID-19 is certainly not the last. The 2021 Integration Segment¹ showed the potential of ECOSOC to use the body of knowledge and experience of its subsidiary machinery and the UN system to set in motion transformative action towards recovering better and implementing the SDGs with the understanding that we cannot continue to approach challenges the same way, because addressing current crises require structural transformations. It also demonstrated the relevance and deliberative nature of ECOSOC, which provides political guidance on how to transform resolutions into concrete actions for the well-being of people, as well as an accountability platform an effective United Nations that delivers tangible results on the ground in improving people's lives.

Report of the Chief Executives Board

During the 2021 Integration Segment, Ms. Simona Petrova, Secretary of the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination (CEB), presented highlights of the annual overview report of the CEB. In 2020, the Board channeled its efforts and focus on the response to and recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic and on increasing the availability of timely, disaggregated, and open data and statistics. The High-level Committee on Programmes (HLCP), through UNHCR, spearheaded a pilot initiative on using predictive analytics in the Sahel, which seeks to increase the availability of high-quality data and to develop predictive models that show where risk hotspots are likely to emerge. Additionally, HLCP continued to effectively leverage knowledge residing across the UN system to facilitate agile 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. HLCP also 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.

¹ The new resolution on strengthening of the Economic and Social Council ([A/RES/75/290 A](#)) mandated that “a coordination segment shall replace the integration segment and the informal meeting of the Council with the Chairs of the subsidiary bodies and will be held annually for up to two days by early February, before the first session of a subsidiary body of the Council.”