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Presentation

**First Integration Dialogue in preparation for the HLPF Segment
27 May 2021, 9:00 a.m.**

Ambassador Sandoval,
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am very pleased to join you on the occasion of the first of a series of integration dialogues in preparation for the Integration Segment in July.

I welcome Ambassador Sandoval's initiative to organize these dialogues in advance of the Segment. This will certainly ensure that the Integration Segment builds on the rich work of the UN system and ECOSOC subsidiary bodies to inject innovative ideas into the Thematic Reviews at the HLPF.

We all know that considering the 2030 Agenda as one indivisible whole is essential for making progress towards the SDGs. So the integrated lens of approaching the work of the UN system and its allies is fundamental to progress.

Today and during the next two dialogues, Member States and the UN System have a platform for advancing discussion on the policies and programmes that will support an equal, resilient, and sustainable recovery from COVID-19 and revamp progress on the SDGs.

Excellencies,

As in past years, this year too, DESA – in collaboration with other UN entities and external partners- is undertaking an extensive substantive review process of the SDGs in preparation for the HLPF.

Just about two weeks ago, a series of expert group meetings were held as part of this process.

Experts from academia, civil society, governments and UN system partners took a deep dive into the progress and challenges to achieving the nine in-focus SDGs (1, 2, 3, 8, 10, 12, 13, 16, 17) including through their interlinkages to the broader 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Over 150 participants joined.

They also focused on identifying what has changed for these SDGs since they were last reviewed in depth at the HLPF.

We heard from them about additional challenges to achieving these goals in the context of the current situation; and how COVID-19 response and recovery efforts can contribute towards advancing them.

We were honoured to have Amb Sandoval at the launch of those meetings and now I would like to share some of their findings with you.

I believe they will complement your own discussions.

First, we face a much steeper road to the SDGs.

Overall, the COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated the challenges and prospects for the SDGs globally. But experts also made it clear that even back in 2019 before the pandemic we were not on track.

The evidence is growing. In 2020, an additional 120 million people were pushed into extreme poverty reversing progress toward SDG 1; the equivalent of 255 million full-time jobs were lost last year and economic growth was negative across the world (SDG 8); and acute hunger has doubled with protracted crises further raising threats of food insecurity (SDG 2).

Second, inequalities remain deep and are rising.

Experts noted the threat of rising inequalities both within and between countries, indicating that current trajectories could lead to distrust of institutions, unrest and even violence with the most vulnerable people and countries bearing the brunt.

Experts also drew attention to the ways in which new channels of inequality are opening up under COVID-19 that interact with on-going trends, but also threaten to have long-lasting effects.

For example, the unequal care burden faced by women, as well as increases in gender-based violence, is putting undue pressure on gender equality that may be difficult to recover.

The digital divide is taking on new meaning as a generation of children without internet access have lost access to education.

Unequal access across countries to financing for recovery and to vaccines may widen and entrench gaps that were shrinking earlier.

Third, our approaches to environmental preservation are far short of the needed interventions.

Despite a temporary reprieve due to the pandemic, preliminary data shows that greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions continued to grow in 2020, and that 2015-2020 was the warmest six-year period on record.

Domestic material consumption per capita and total global material footprint as well as food waste and e-waste all continue to rise around the world.

Addressing these crises will require major structural transformations in the way people live, work, produce and consume.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

There were also some points of consensus about what needs to happen next, and urgently.

First, there was a consensus that ending poverty and hunger, ensuring healthy lives and creating decent jobs and livelihoods need not be viewed as incompatible with decarbonization and protection of natural resources. Indeed, technology and innovation can be harnessed to manage trade-offs and to respond to challenges.

Second, during the cross-cutting sessions a recurring message was that an integrated approach to the SDGs, grounded in knowledge and science, and inclusive of different voices - indigenous peoples, older populations, people with disabilities and others - is imperative to accelerate progress across the entire 2030 Agenda. The Global Sustainable Development Report from 2019 has already laid out a series of entry points through which pragmatic, collaborative action can be taken.

Third, there was agreement that collaboration and support both within and across countries was essential to reduce inequalities, and for overcoming the COVID-19 crisis.

Strengthened social protection systems and new social contracts would help, but creating fiscal space would also be necessary.

I recall one of the experts stating that for many countries, debt servicing payments are higher than expenditure on health care systems.

The discussions included a note of hope, observing that the pandemic recovery period may provide an unprecedented opportunity to overcome inertia and make the kinds of large-scale and ambitious changes that are needed.

Governments can direct recovery investments toward renewable energy, sustainable infrastructure, nature-based solutions, and green jobs, as well as a renewed commitment to international cooperation.

The private sector can work to shift to sustainable production practices, and those individuals and communities that are able may move toward lasting changes in consumption patterns.

Excellencies,

The HLPF provides a unique opportunity to advance informed decision-making at a time of unprecedented challenges and to forge global solidarity and multilateral cooperation.

I am pleased that the Expert Group Meeting we organized, and the Integration Dialogues we are launching today, will contribute to the evidence and knowledge base for the Forum's discussions.

The dialogue today and in coming days can help to identify promising areas for driving transformation and SDG implementation based on your experiences and knowledge. It can further guide the UN system in its work.

I wish you a successful meeting.

Thank you.
