

Statement by Renato Zerbini Ribeiro-Leão,
Chair of the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights,
Integration Segment, Panel 2, ECOSOC, 2 July 2021

check against delivery

Distinguished Ambassador Juan Sandoval Mendiola, Vice-President of ECOSOC;

Distinguished Ms. Maria Francesca Spatolisano, Moderator of this Second Integration Dialogue;

Distinguished Panelists and Lead discussants;

Ladies and gentlemen,

I am pleased to address you as Chair of the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (CESCR) in this important discussion on building back better towards inclusive, sustainable, and just economies for recovery: Re-designing the contract between people and planet.

We all agree that the situation we are facing is dramatic.

It is also evident that the pandemic alone is not the cause of this crisis.

Many of the restrictive measures taken to curb the spread of the virus have had devastating impacts, disproportionately affecting those already most disadvantaged.

The Committee has focused on this crisis during the past year. We have flagged that the pandemic has magnified the decades of underinvestment in public health services, social protection programmes and other areas – rendering them ill equipped to respond effectively and expeditiously.

We have also drawn attention to the disproportionate impact the crisis is having on those in most vulnerable situations within our societies, and globally. Income and wealth inequalities within and between countries are deepening and exacerbating the existing inequalities in the enjoyment of economic, social and cultural rights.

We must be able to do better.

Each of these situations requires targeted interventions, tailored to the specific circumstances, based on reliable and disaggregated data. The Committee has consistently emphasized the importance of identifying and prioritizing the needs of those groups that are disadvantaged and vulnerable to systemic and intersectional forms of discrimination, in devising legislative and policy changes. Without a careful analysis of which persons are most affected, policies cannot be well targeted and effective.

This crisis also highlights the crucial importance of international assistance and cooperation, a core principle enshrined in the Covenant. We have underscored the mutually reinforcing nature of the 2030 sustainable development agenda and international human rights standards. The International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, as a core United Nations human rights treaty, is thus a fundamental pillar of the 2030 Agenda. By complying with the normative obligations

Statement by Renato Zerbini Ribeiro-Leão,
Chair of the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights,
Integration Segment, Panel 2, ECOSOC, 2 July 2021

check against delivery

of the Covenant, States will strengthen their ability to realise the SDGs and fulfil their pledge to LNOB. What we see now are deepening inequalities, increased poverty, widening gaps. The hard won gains, are being reversed.

We have an opportunity to build back better, towards inclusive, sustainable and just economies. To reduce inequalities within and between countries. It is time for action, accelerated and concerted action.

International assistance and cooperation are a key component of this effort. International cooperation can occur bilaterally or multilaterally, through the UN and through international financial institutions, to mitigate the impact of the pandemic on most at-risk persons. The Committee encouraged States to use their voting powers in international financial institutions to alleviate the financial burden of developing countries in combating the pandemic. The Committee also stressed that States must strengthen international cooperation to guarantee, as soon as possible, affordable vaccines globally. The current restrictions imposed by the intellectual property rules in the TRIPS Agreement make it very difficult to achieve the international cooperation needed for the massive scale up in production and distribution of vaccines to the levels that are now technically possible and urgently required. That is imperative in order to avoid millions of preventable deaths, overcome the economic and social disruptions created by the pandemic and reduce the risks of dangerous mutations of the virus.

The Committee has also highlighted that such international assistance and cooperation include the sharing of research, medical equipment and supplies, and best practices in combating the virus; coordinated action to reduce the economic and social impacts of the crisis; and joint endeavours by all States to ensure an effective, equitable economic recovery. The needs of vulnerable and disadvantaged groups and fragile countries, including least developed countries, countries in conflict and post-conflict situations, should be at the centre of such international endeavours. We have also identified a number of special targeted measures States should take to protect and mitigate the impact of the pandemic on the most disadvantaged.

COVID-19 has highlighted the critical 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, among others.

I would like once again to use this opportunity to remind us all of the indivisibility of all human rights, and interdependence of all the SDGs. Let us ensure that international human rights standards are a key component of the blueprint for recovery. As the HLPF this year focuses specifically on a number of Goals, I would like to refer to the joint Submission the Chairpersons of all United Nations human rights treaty bodies in which we identify areas for action in the implementation of the SDGs. We also express support

Statement by Renato Zerbini Ribeiro-Leão,
Chair of the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights,
Integration Segment, Panel 2, ECOSOC, 2 July 2021

check against delivery

of the call of the United Nations Secretary-General for a New Social Contract to accelerate the achievement of the SDGs and for a New Global Deal to ensure that power, wealth and opportunities are shared more broadly and fairly at the international level. The Chairpersons submitted key messages for inclusion into the Ministerial Declaration of the 2021 HLPF in this regard.

Let us place human rights at the heart of the efforts to build back better.

Thank you for your attention.