

UNITED NATIONS



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UNDER-SECRETARY-GENERAL FOR ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL
AFFAIRS**

**Closing Session
Economic and Social Council
Operational Activities for Development Segment**

**Virtual Format
Thursday, 20 May 2021**

Your Excellency, Ambassador Sergiy Kyslytsya, Vice-President of ECOSOC,
Madam Deputy Secretary-General,
Excellencies,
Distinguished Delegates,
Colleagues,

I wish to congratulate the President of ECOSOC, His Excellency, Ambassador Munir Akram, and our distinguished Chair, His Excellency, Ambassador Sergiy Kyslytsya and his team, for delivering a successful Operational Activities Segment.

The level of participation from across the globe demonstrates Member States' steadfast commitment to the work of the United Nations development system.

This past year has been unlike any other in living memory.

As COVID-19 was wreaking havoc across the globe, the UN development system came together as one. It leveraged its full expertise and resources in support of countries' efforts to combat the pandemic and its impact on people's lives.

It was a stress test for the repositioned UN development system. Without doubt, the system rose to the challenge.

The 2020 QCPR, adopted five months ago in the midst of the pandemic, reflects a strong emphasis on:

- disaster risk reduction,
- resilience, and
- leaving no one behind.

It provides a strong foundation to further consolidate and operationalize the reform of the UN development system, in support of building back better, and greener.

As we slowly emerge from the crisis, we must turn our attention to stepping up our support in critical areas highlighted in the new QCPR. This calls for a renewed focus on poverty eradication and leaving no one behind. It also includes supporting social protection, quality education, and partnerships, especially in countries in special situations. And we need to build up our support to climate action, environment, and biodiversity.

It is also critical to strengthen rights-based and gender-responsive approaches throughout our work. We can bolster the principle of leaving no one behind, by building on the strategies and roadmaps of the Secretary-General on:

- digital inclusion,
- youth,
- disability inclusion,
- zero sexual exploitation and abuse, and
- sustainability management.

The DESA surveys of programme countries reveal that, for the next four years, UN support will be needed in the areas of:

- health and wellbeing,
- decent work and economic growth,
- education,
- poverty eradication,
- food security, and
- combatting climate change.

The UN development system will respond to those calls. It needs to be guided by the same sense of solidarity, commitment, and collaboration around collective results, that characterized the response to COVID-19. This is necessary to help us reverse the impact of the pandemic, and redouble efforts to achieve the SDGs in this Decade of Action.

This year's segment discussed how to best help countries overcome complex development challenges – in particular, through more integrated policy support solutions. Regardless of UN entities physical presence, the Cooperation Framework is the central mechanism for a whole-of-system approach. At the regional level, the newly established Regional Collaborative Platforms (RCPs) can leverage regional development multipliers. This can be done by addressing cross-border and transboundary development challenges.

We have heard the need for more nimble and tailored responses, especially to countries in special situations.

For Multi-country Offices (MCO), this means further increasing system-wide support to the countries and territories they serve. Stronger institutional support is needed for Small Island Developing States.

For Least Developed Countries and Landlocked Developing Countries, the response should be anchored within:

- their respective programmes of action, and
- the preparations for the upcoming Fifth UN Conference on the Least Developed Countries.

The system must also assess how to provide more impactful support to middle-income countries, including their access to financing the SDGs.

Currently, some four billion people are outside social protection schemes. It is vital to look at poverty from a multidimensional perspective, and address long-term social protection. As guided by the new QCPR, the UNSDG will elaborate a coherent, system-wide strategy. The aim is to help countries implement nationally appropriate social protection systems for all, including social protection floors.

Throughout the segment, we have also seen the emphasis on strengthened collaboration and coherence across humanitarian, development and peace actions in fragile contexts. The High-level meeting of the General Assembly on peacebuilding financing – scheduled at its 76th session in 2022 – is an opportunity to reflect how donors’ funding patterns can support this process.

Excellencies,

In 2020, the vast majority – 82% - of countries that participated in the Voluntary National Reviews at the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development, considered the process effective in advancing national implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

To maximize impact, two key follow-up actions are needed:

1. a better link between these VNRs and the Cooperation Frameworks, and
2. stronger cooperation with international financial institutions and regional development banks. This is the new frontier.

At present, one third of UN Country Teams report having joint initiatives with international financial institutions – to promote sustainable financial systems at country level. The system’s support to integrated national financing frameworks (INFFs) in 70 countries, is an important entry point to close the link between national development plans, and the financial resources needed to achieve them. The Inter-Agency Task Force on Financing for Development coordinated by

DESA – which includes the Bretton Woods institutions – has developed guidance material, which is available on a global INFF knowledge platform.

Excellencies,
Madam Deputy Secretary-General,
Distinguished Delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

The Department of Economic and Social Affairs, UN DESA, is dedicated to supporting the implementation and follow-up to the QCPR. This includes through our:

- data collection and analysis,
- reporting, and
- the elaboration of the new QCPR monitoring and reporting framework. This is all in working closely with the Secretary-General and Deputy Secretary-General.

I thank you.
