



# ECOSOC

United Nations Economic and Social Council

TAKING ACTION TO IMPROVE LIVES

## 57th Session of the Commission for Social Development 11 February 2019

Opening Statement  
by H.E. Valentin Rybakov (Belarus)  
delivered on behalf of  
the President of the Economic and Social Council  
H.E. Inga Rhonda King (Saint Vincent and the Grenadines)

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

On behalf of the President of ECOSOC, it is my honour to join you at the opening of the 57<sup>th</sup> session of the Commission for Social Development.

As the Vice-President of the General Assembly said, this year is critical for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The July HLPF will take place between 9<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> July, under the theme: *“Empowering people and ensuring inclusiveness and equality.”*

There are six sustainable development goals under review this year:

**SDG 4** on quality education; **SDG 8** on economic growth and decent work; **SDG 10** on inequalities; **SDG 13** on climate action; **SDG 16** on peaceful societies and robust institutions; and **SDG 17** on the means of implementation.

We welcome the theme for this Commission for Social Development is *“Addressing Challenges to Inequality through Fiscal, Wage and Social Protection Policies,”* which is aligned with the theme of the HLPF.

As we have heard from others this morning, inequality is becoming the defining issue of our time. DESA reports have highlighted that where people are born and where they live have a strong influence on their lifelong opportunities; income inequality has increased in the last three decades in a majority of developed countries and some large emerging economies, although it has declined in most countries of Latin America and the Caribbean and in many African countries; Health disparities remain high and disparities in education are also enduring. For example, in developing countries,

children in the lowest 20 per cent of the income distribution are three times less likely than those in wealthier households to have been delivered by skilled health personnel, nearly three times more likely to be underweight, and twice as likely to die before their fifth birthday.

These figures show that the world is currently moving in the wrong direction. A world in which extreme wealth co-exists with extreme poverty is a world of strife.

It is not possible to achieve social cohesion and inclusive societies under these conditions. And it is not possible to achieve the sustainable development goals under these conditions either.

Therefore, it is important that you, the members of this Commission advise us all about the necessary actions required for the world to alter course and move towards shared wealth and prosperity. The social dimension of sustainable development is a key pillar as it speaks directly to people's lives.

Excellencies,

We are strongly committed to strengthening the role of ECOSOC in guiding the work of our subsidiary bodies to enhance their contribution to implementing the 2030 Agenda. We are also committed to strengthening the role of the functional commissions, including the Commission for Social Development, in the work of the United Nations.

A strong and effective Commission for Social Development is critical to strengthening the social dimensions of sustainable development and to the success of the High-level Political Forum.

Since its inception, the HLPF has provided a platform for sharing of experiences, including successes, challenges and lessons learned. It has created a new space for political leadership, substantive policy guidance, and recommendations for the implementation of sustainable development in all its dimensions.

The HLPF is inspiring sustainable development policies across the board. It aims to ensure that the 2030 Agenda remains relevant and ambitious, and focuses on the assessment of progress, achievements and challenges faced by all countries. During the July session, 51 countries are planning to present Voluntary National Reviews.

The success of the July HLPF will be critical for the HLPF Summit in September, when world leaders will review overall progress on the 2030 Agenda and all 17 SDGs. This is why the ECOSOC President has made it her priority to have the most successful HLPF to date, under the auspices of ECOSOC.

We look forward to receiving recommendations from your Commission to inform our discussions in July.

I wish you a successful Commission and thank you for your kind attention.