



H.E. Ms. Inga Rhonda King
President of ECOSOC
Statement at the
Security Council's Open Debate on Multilateralism and
Strengthening the Role of the United Nations

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Mr. President,
Mr. Secretary General,
Excellencies,
Distinguished Delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I wish to thank the Chinese Presidency for convening today's meeting and inviting me to this open debate on multilateralism and strengthening the role of the United Nations.

This debate demonstrates the importance that the Security Council attaches to reaffirming the values of the rules-based order created 73 years ago.

Three years ago we celebrated a big victory for multilateralism – the adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The process was universal, integrated, and inclusive: It represented the rich and the poor, governments and non-governmental stakeholders, those concerned with each of the three dimensions of sustainable development (economic development, social development and the environment), as well as peace and security. And, as we implement, we cannot afford to forget that it was dialogue and the painstaking inclusive approach that got us to this point.

It is troubling that multilateralism is so frequently being questioned today. Many are asking whether this agreement would be at all possible in today's political reality.

But, are we asking the right question?

Perhaps the answer to our fears and concerns lie in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

This open debate is an opportunity to remind ourselves that multilateralism works. It was multilateralism that delivered conditions for economic growth after World War II. It was multilateralism that allowed us to reach the objective of halving extreme poverty after 2000.

Climate change, technological disruption, and the threat of nuclear war are the defining issues of our time. The issues of refugees, migration and trade need to be addressed.

All of these challenges need a global solution.

Only the United Nations allows everyone to bring their viewpoint and find common approaches and solutions. Now more than ever, we must keep the channels for dialogue wide open.

So, how can we enhance multilateralism?

We need to fulfil the commitments in the 2030 Agenda, which was the most ambitious and universal agenda ever adopted by the United Nations. Upholding the principles of the 2030 Agenda is paramount to solving our most pressing challenges. The High Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development creates a space for real dialogue and a platform for knowledge sharing.

I am inspired by the strong commitment we have seen from 102 countries which have already presented voluntary national reviews with an additional 41 scheduled to present their VNRs in 2019. Next year, the High-Level Political Forum, under the auspices of ECOSOC, will review SDGs on jobs and growth, inequality, climate change, education and, of course, global partnerships, and address the theme on inclusiveness and equality – all relevant as we grapple with the burning issues of our time.

The High Level Political Forum, which will also meet under the auspices of the General Assembly at summit level in September next year, provides us with a perfect opportunity to take stock,

address solutions and catalyse action toward implementation of the 2030 Agenda. It will be an opportunity to reaffirm our commitment to global cooperation and create the conditions for peace and sustainable development because we cannot have either unless we have both.

Mr President,

ECOSOC and the Security Council have cooperated in the past when the *ECOSOC Ad Hoc Advisory Groups on African countries emerging from conflict* worked closely with the *Security Council Ad Hoc Working Group on Conflict in Africa* in Guinea-Bissau and Burundi in the period 2002-2007.

Another example of joint efforts and integrated approaches was the request by the Security Council for ECOSOC's advice on a long-term programme of support for Haiti in 1999. Members of the Security Council may wish to consider whether the use of Article 65 of the Charter, on the exchange of information between ECOSOC and the Security Council, could be a way to strengthen the dialogue between the two councils.

I am optimistic that we can bring more coherence across the three main pillars of the UN. The working relationship between ECOSOC and the Peacebuilding Commission is becoming stronger. For the first time, the Presidency of ECOSOC has been invited to address the annual session of the Peacebuilding Commission, which will focus on the Sahel. The following day, on 13 November, the ECOSOC-PBC joint meeting will address the “Linkages between climate change and challenges to peacebuilding and sustaining peace in the Sahel.”

This year, the Presidency was also invited for the first time to brief the Human Rights Council on the outcomes of this year’s HLPF, seizing the opportunity created by resolution 37/25 to mainstream the 2030 Agenda into the Human Rights agenda.

ECOSOC provides the space for NGOs to give voice to their hopes and dreams for the future. Its Commission on the Status of Women is also a space for accountability on Security Council resolution 1325 on women, peace and security. I also offer the ECOSOC Youth Forum as a space for an integrated dialogue on

youth, peace and security to discuss the economic underpinnings of the historic Security Council resolution 2250 adopted in 2015.

While we must continue to break down silos between the main organs, it is also clear that our organs are in need of reform. Indeed, the membership recognised the wisdom of the Secretary-General's reform efforts last session.

Still outstanding, however, is the much-needed reform of the Security Council.

Of critical importance also is the ongoing work on the revitalisation of the General Assembly and the efforts to align the work of the General Assembly and ECOSOC in light of the adoption of the 2030 Agenda.

And, as ECOSOC President, it is my responsibility and a priority to facilitate the implementation of the innovations mandated in the outcomes of the review process aimed at strengthening the ECOSOC as articulated in 72/305.

With the 2030 Agenda, we pledged that no one would be left behind, and we committed to “endeavour to reach the furthest behind first”. We should be guided by this principle in our pursuit for the world we want and this should be the basis for reaffirming our commitment to multilateralism.

In closing, Mr President, I draw the Council’s attention to the last words of the late, great mathematician, Stephen Hawking. In his last book, entitled *Brief Answers to Big Questions*, Hawking, explained that

“When we see the Earth from space, we see ourselves as a whole. We see the unity, and not the divisions. It is such a simple image with a compelling message; one planet, one human race.”

Stephen Hawking died earlier this year, but not before his own call to action:

“I hope that going forward, ...people with power can show creativity, courage and leadership. Let them rise to the challenge of the sustainable development goals, and act,... I am very aware of the preciousness of time. Seize the moment. Act now.”

I thank you.