



**26TH PLENARY MEETING OF THE 76TH SESSION OF THE
UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY**

**INTRODUCTION OF THE REPORT OF THE
ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL**

BY

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**2ND NOVEMBER 2021
10:00 HOURS
GENERAL ASSEMBLY HALL**

Please check against delivery.

Mr. President,

Excellencies,

Dear Colleagues,

a. Introduction

1. It is my pleasure to introduce to you the **Report of the Economic and Social Council for its 2020-2021 cycle** on behalf of my predecessor, His Excellency Ambassador Munir Akram of Pakistan. He conveys his regrets as he could not be present today due to an unexpected commitment.
2. As Ambassador Akram said in his handover statement, “throughout the past year, ECOSOC was at the centre of the intense international discourse on ways and means to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic and its consequences, while also persisting in the endeavour to implement Agenda 2030 and the SDGs and avert the existential threat of a climate catastrophe. These unprecedented challenges required new, bold and creative responses from the world community.”
3. The Council contributed to shaping such responses to the multiple crises we are facing and to advancing the commitment to international solidarity and multilateralism.

b. High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development and Contribution to the Response to COVID-19

4. The commitment to international solidarity and multilateralism was best demonstrated, at the conclusion of ECOSOC session, when

ECOSOC and the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development adopted by consensus a Political Declaration committing to a response to COVID-19 that advances the SDGs.

5. The high-level and diverse participation in the HLPF, with **eight Heads of State and Government** and **over 100 Ministers**, showed the continued commitment to the 2030 Agenda and the Paris Agreement, which were broadly seen as the roadmap for recovering better from COVID-19. The Voluntary National Reviews from **42 countries** highlighted policy approaches to embark on such recovery paths.
6. The meeting, however, also showed the growing gap between the North and the South and expressed concern regarding the real risk of inequalities among countries starting to increase again, as developing countries are left behind on the road to the SDGs, and that this will result in further increase in poverty and political tensions. The HLPF and ECOSOC also gave new impetus to the strong commitment to support LDCs, LLDCs, and SIDS, which have been hard hit by the crisis.
7. Another strong message at the HLPF, ECOSOC special meeting on vaccines and throughout the year was that ensuring equitable, universal and affordable access to the COVID-19 vaccine is a moral imperative, the only way to overcome the pandemic and a sine qua non condition for a resilient and sustainable world recovery.
8. There was also much emphasis on the need to mobilize financial resources to support developing countries' recovery from COVID-19, including in relation to sovereign debt. At its FFD Forum, ECOSOC reached agreement on measures for financing recovery

from the pandemic and achieving the SDGs. At its multistakeholder STI forum, ECOSOC identified concrete ways to utilize science, technology and innovation, especially digitalization, to advance the SDGs.

9. ECOSOC also put a spotlight on addressing inequality and its structural causes and reforming the socio-economic systems that have perpetuated it. It called for global action to address inequality and uproot discrimination, including racism, from the very fabric of our social and political institutions.
10. The HLPF deliberations and ECOSOC meetings also reaffirmed and emphasized that people must transform the way they live, work, travel and consume in order to address the interlinked crises of climate change, biodiversity loss, pollution and waste. There was agreement that addressing these issues, and more generally moving from the crisis to SDG progress, required a whole of society approach and innovative partnerships engaging governments, the private sector, civil society and others.

c. Coordination of the UN System Activities at Country Level

11. Over the year, another major contribution of ECOSOC was to support UN system coordinated action in the context of COVID-19. ECOSOC showed that it could deliver on its Charter mandate to coordinate the work of the UN system in times of crises.

d. Operational Activities Segment

12. Through its Operational Activities for the Development Segment in May 2021, ECOSOC delivered on its role as an accountability and oversight platform to accelerate the performance and results of the UN development system in supporting countries to realise the 2030 Agenda.
13. Member States reviewed progress on UN system-wide performance in launching the implementation of the 2020 Quadrennial Comprehensive Policy Review (QCPR) and in implementing the key elements of the 2018 General Assembly resolution on the repositioning of the UN development system, against the backdrop of the pandemic. The Segment demonstrated the strong commitment of the Secretary-General, the Deputy Secretary-General and the UN development system to respond to the ambitious mandates set in the two resolutions, and the dedication of Member States to ensure they remain a top priority. It also further stressed the complementarity of the roles and responsibilities the General Assembly, ECOSOC, and the governing bodies of the UN development system and the need to further strengthen them.

e. Humanitarian Affairs Segment

14. The 2021 Humanitarian Affairs Segment focused on **"Strengthening Humanitarian Assistance to Face the Challenges of 2021 and Beyond: Mobilizing Respect for International Humanitarian Law, Inclusion, Gender, Innovation and Partnerships."** The message that came out loud and clear from the discussions is that in the face of global, interconnected and multiple crises, we must stand and work together to urgently address the immediate humanitarian needs

while tackling underlying vulnerabilities to conflict, climate change, inequalities, development disparities, and increasing disease risk. We must be proactive, innovative and agile. The ECOSOC Transition Event pointed out how much famine is man-made, which also means it can be “man-unmade”. Concrete proposals emanated from the discussions.

f. Integration Segment

15. Besides country-level activities, ECOSOC also provided direction to the normative and policy work of the UN system and its subsidiary bodies. With the preparatory integration dialogues and high-level participation of ECOSOC subsidiary bodies and UN system entities, the 2021 Integration Segment, convened just before the HLPF in early July, and distilled and amplified the ECOSOC system’s integrated policy solutions for inclusive, resilient and sustainable recovery.
16. The General Assembly, in its latest resolution on ECOSOC strengthening, created a new Coordination Segment, which replaced the Integration Segment. It would be important that the new Coordination Segment builds on lessons learnt from the 2021 Integration Segment, in particular its rich preparatory process.
17. The Council must seize the opportunity to harness the knowledge and expertise of the ECOSOC subsidiary bodies and the UN system in order to provide policy guidance and coordination for an inclusive and resilient recovery from COVID-19 and the achievement of the 2030 Agenda.

g. Youth Forum

18. The work of ECOSOC was informed and enriched by the youth. The 10th Anniversary of the ECOSOC Youth Forum, convened in early April, demonstrated again the importance for young people to contribute to policy discussions through their ideas, solutions and innovations. Because it was fully virtual, the Forum this year, benefitted from an unprecedented level of attendance with a record number of **19,000** participants. The ECOSOC Youth Forum has now become the main platform for the youth to make their voices, on the SDGs, heard. It is the largest gathering of young people at the United Nations. It is important for the Council to preserve this unique space.

19. The 2020-2021 Session of ECOSOC also produced very tangible outcomes, such as the advances in the dialogue and action on sustainable infrastructure investment as well as the launch of a process to improve the accessibility of open source technologies.

**Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

20. I would like to conclude by referring to the messages that came out of ECOSOC High-Level Segment on “**Strengthening ECOSOC at its 75th Anniversary for Sustainable and Resilient Recovery from COVID 19 and Advancing the 2030 Agenda.**” The Segment emphasized international cooperation and solidarity as well as affirmed the need to renew and strengthen multilateralism, themes that indeed cut across all meetings of ECOSOC this year.

21. Countries from all regions stressed the important role of ECOSOC as the main Organ for coordination, reviewing the operational activities of the UN system, listening to the voices and aspirations of the youth and actively working to leave no one behind in a sustainable and resilient recovery.
22. I want to make a strong appeal to Member States to believe in the Economic and Social Council. It is a Charter body with important functions and mandates, which should be exploited to address the most difficult challenges of the 21st century, from climate change and major population movements to global economic risks, pandemics and technological advances. We need to work together to address these challenges that threaten our progress towards the SDGs.
23. Let us do our utmost to ensure the successful implementation of the measures adopted in June by the General Assembly for strengthening ECOSOC. A forward-looking Economic and Social Council should be the leading global forum where global economic, social and environmental challenges are discussed and debated. This is what was intended at the founding of the United Nations.

I thank you for your kind attention.