

STATEMENT

BY

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PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED NATIONS ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL
COUNCIL (ECOSOC)**

AT

**ANNUAL GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE CONFERENCE OF NGOs
WITH CONSULTATIVE RELATIONS WITH THE
UNITED NATIONS (CoNGO)**

**29 NOVEMBER 2021
10:00 – 10:30 HOURS**

HYBRID FORMAT

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**Mr. President,
Ladies and Gentlemen,
Dear Friends at Civil Society Organizations,**

- 1.** It is a great pleasure for me to address this Annual General Assembly of CoNGO, in my capacity as President of the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC).
- 2.** The role of civil society organizations in the work of ECOSOC is enshrined in the UN Charter, and has proven to be a key aspect of the functioning of the Council -- more than of any other UN Charter body. It is for the same reason that, in my inaugural statement on 23 July, I prioritized inclusivity and partnerships with all relevant stakeholders.
- 3.** Today, we are proud that over **6,000** Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) have consultative status with ECOSOC. This consultative mechanism enables us to hear and take into account the important voice of the real peoples -- including those that are most vulnerable -- and thus greatly enhance our work, by providing expert advice and policy recommendations to our deliberations.
- 4.** NGOs play a vital role in the follow-up to the Council's policy-decisions, at the national and local level, for effective implementation of sustainable development policies. Your work also assists Governments in their implementation efforts, by holding them accountable for the commitments made in addressing the many challenges faced.
- 5.** In this troubled world -- in which we are confronted by simultaneous and intertwined health, economic, social and environmental crises -- your role in mobilizing public action for inclusive involvement in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its 17 SDGs, is more crucial now than ever before.

6. We also continue to witness the deficit in the much needed global solidarity and international cooperation for equitable access to affordable COVID-19 vaccines. The continuous evolution of variants such as Omicron is a clear demonstration that the global fight against this pandemic is far from over -- and can only be won through collective action that also includes participation of civil society organizations.

Mr. President,

7. The Council has a busy agenda. Our programme of Segments and Forums in 2022 is dense enough to allow for a thorough review of key components of UN policy-making on sustainable development. As you may already be aware, the session will culminate with the High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF) in July on the theme: ***"Building Back Better from the Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19) While Advancing the Full Implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development."***
8. The specific SDGs to be reviewed in-depth at the HLPF will include Goals 4 **on quality education**, 5 **on gender equality**, 14 **on life below water**, 15 **on life on land**, and 17 **on partnerships for the Goals**.
9. In addition, **46 countries** will present Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs) on where they stand on their national implementation of the 2030 Agenda, and also how they intend to accelerate progress towards the achievement of the Goals and targets set in 2015.
10. During its cycle, the Council and its subsidiary bodies will convene many sessions and meetings, which will all assert the role of the ECOSOC system in our common global efforts. ECOSOC is therefore a unique intergovernmental Principal Organ, because it consists of a system in which all components have a specific part to play towards a coherent multilateral action.

- 11.** Among many other processes, allow me to mention two that have been established, or given a stronger role during the recent ECOSOC review which resulted in adoption of General Assembly resolution 75/290A in June this year. First, is the **Coordination Segment** (previously Integration Segment), to be held on **3 - 4 February 2022**. It is intended to strengthen the role of the Council in the coordination and implementation efforts by the whole UN system.
- 12.** Second, is the **Partnership Forum**, to be held a day before the Coordination Segment (**on 2 February 2022**). The Forum has been revamped to allow all stakeholders -- including Civil Society Organizations -- to inspire the upcoming work of ECOSOC and the HLPF, and share transformative ideas and recommendations.
- 13.** I also wish to make a special reference to the **Youth Forum** held in **April**, in which civil society organizations have always been a key player. I invite any new ideas on how this Forum can be further enhanced, to ensure effective engagement of the youth in global decision-making -- a *sine qua non* for the success of our collective efforts.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

- 14.** Inequality and racism are among the key priorities of my Presidency. As I indicated also in my inaugural statement, ECOSOC should continue to contribute in addressing the challenges we face in these areas. I therefore intend to convene a meeting on the root causes of inequality and racism, building on the outcomes of the 2021 meeting.
- 15.** I trust that this would be an opportunity to also discuss whether COVID-19 has increased or further undermined the attention to SDG 10 -- which was earlier seen by some assessments as an "**orphan SDG**". It would also be a moment to address racism, as one aspect of inter-generational reproduction of poverty and inequality. For this initiative as well, I count on strong civil society engagement.

- 16.** Let me emphasize that in all the ECOSOC events I encourage civil society organizations to be innovative and forward-looking, with a view to support the design of more transformative policies. Your early preparation for the forthcoming events, your reflections on the format and the collaboration that can be built among yourselves through joint statements, initiatives and actions will help to be fully heard.
- 17.** It is also notable that virtual platforms that have so far been utilized since the start of the pandemic have a great potential to enhance the engagement of many. But we are also mindful that this poses some connectivity challenges for those who do not have an easy access to the required means and technologies.
- 18.** I reassure you that careful consideration should be given to ensure that virtual platforms fully facilitate, and not undermine, active civil society organizations' involvement in ECOSOC meetings. I, together with the Bureau members, will be pleased to engage with your representatives and further discuss these issues in the months to come.
- 19.** As I conclude, I reaffirm that you can count on my Presidency as a dependable partner for your engagement in the work of ECOSOC at its 2022 Session. I wish you success in your important General Assembly session.

Thank you very much for your attention.