

**Draft Statement by the Vice President of the General
Assembly**

**to the 57th session of the Commission for Social
Development**

February 11, 2019

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a great honour for me to deliver these opening remarks on behalf of the President of the General Assembly, Her Excellency María Fernanda Espinosa Garcés.

As she has aptly remarked, “the 2030 Agenda is a jewel of multilateralism. It raised the expectations of the whole world to have a better future for all”.

At a time when multilateralism is facing headwinds, it is imperative that we demonstrate that multilateralism constitutes the best and only way to address the global challenges that stand in the way of sustainable development.

First and foremost, this means we must deliver on the central goal of the 2030 Agenda, of eradicating poverty everywhere, as well as its principle of “leaving no one behind.” How does the priority theme of the Commission – “Addressing

inequality and challenges to social inclusion through fiscal, wage and social protection policies” – impact those left behind?

- These are the people who lack opportunities to participate in and benefit from development progress
- Often, they are excluded due to their gender, age, disability, indigenous or migratory status
- They endure isolation and vulnerability due to their place of residence, or face disadvantage due to inequitable policies, institutions and laws
- Many face income and food insecurity and are disproportionately found in the informal economy
- And unfortunately, they have less chances to benefit from quality education and healthcare as well as adequate social protection.

The evidence shows that the extension of pensions has been the most notable advance in expanding social protection in recent decades, with close to 68 per cent of older persons receiving a pension in 2016. Yet, only 28 per cent of persons with severe disabilities received disability benefits, only 35 per cent of children enjoyed social protection and just 22 per cent of unemployed workers received unemployment benefits.

Those at risk of being furthest behind are more vulnerable to the impacts of climate change, natural hazards, violence, conflict and displacement. They are disconnected from accountable institutions and are not consulted by those

in power. They are not counted in official data, they are invisible.

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen

The 2030 Agenda recognized that without a paradigm shift on sustainable development, the furthest behind will continue to be locked out of global progress, unable to benefit from or participate in the global economy or frontier technologies. Without urgent action to address inequalities, progress will continue to fall short of our ambitions.

2019 presents a historic moment for the High-Level Political Forum which will be convened this year, for the first time, under the auspices of both the ECOSOC, in July, and the General Assembly, in September.

The Summit of Heads of State and Government in September will review overall progress on the 2030 Agenda, raise political momentum at the highest level, and mobilize further action to realize the goals. We have a unique opportunity to get back on track with implementation. This must recognize the need for a comprehensive and complementary implementation of the 2030 Agenda and related agreements such as the Paris Climate Agreement and the Addis Ababa Action Agenda.

The Commission for Social Development must provide a strong and powerful contribution to both the ECOSOC High-level Political Forum in July and the HLPF in September with concrete policy advice and key messages on the social pillar of sustainable development. Your focus on how countries can leverage fiscal, wage and social protection policies to address inequalities and challenges to social inclusion is therefore timely.

The President of the General Assembly is mandated to convene a High-Level Thematic Debate on Inclusive Development and Inequality within and among Countries on May 14, 2019, which shares the theme of current Session of the Commission. I am confident that The HLTD will build upon your discussion over the coming days and contribute to relevant review at High Level Political Forum.

Ladies and Gentlemen

Our efforts to revitalize the work of the General Assembly, as mandated by General Assembly Resolution 72/313, aims to make the United Nations relevant for all. In this regard, the Assembly has once again reaffirmed, through its resolution 72/305 of last June, the need for a more effective ECOSOC as a principal organ for coordination, policy review, policy dialogue and recommendations on issues of economic and social development. The resolution also calls for the balanced integration of the three dimensions of sustainable development (social, economic and environment). Your

Commission is at the core of this vision to place people at the center of development.

I look forward to the outcome of your work and wish you all a most productive session.

Thank you.