



**United
Nations**

Department of
Economic and
Social Affairs

Aide-Mémoire

UNITED NATIONS VIRTUAL INTER-AGENCY EXPERT GROUP MEETING: THE THIRD UNITED NATIONS DECADE FOR THE ERADICATION OF POVERTY (2018–2027)

“ACCELERATING GLOBAL ACTIONS FOR A WORLD WITHOUT POVERTY”

24-27 May 2021

I. BACKGROUND

The world is not on track to eradicate poverty by 2030. The remarkable income poverty reduction that the world had experienced since 1990 was not distributed evenly across and within countries. Moreover, gains slowed in the few years preceding 2020. The global rate of extreme poverty (the proportion of the population that lives on less than \$1.90 a day – the international poverty line) decreased by only less than half a percentage point per year after 2015, from 10.7 per cent in 2015 to 9.3 per cent in 2017, while it dropped by more than one percentage point per year on average over the preceding 25 years, from 36.2 per cent in 1990 to 10.7 per cent in 2015.¹ Much of this deceleration was being experienced by low-income developing countries as well as some middle-income countries due to a myriad of factors that include the global economic slowdown, cuts in social spending and conflicts. In 2019, more than 767 million people were estimated to still be living in extreme poverty. If the additional role of nonmonetary deprivations – such as being sick and having limited or no formal education – on people’s lives is taken into account, even more people lived in multidimensional poverty across 107 developing countries: 1.3 billion out of 5.9 billion people or 22 per cent.²

The situation in sub-Saharan Africa was the most alarming. The region’s poverty reduction had been too slow so that the region continued to have very high levels of extreme poverty and the largest concentration of extreme poor. On average, over 40 per cent of sub-Saharan Africa’s population still lived in extreme poverty and 18 of the 20 economies with the largest poverty rates in the world belonged to the region. Worse, due to high population growth, the number of people living in extreme poverty had risen in sub-Saharan Africa and (parts of) Latin America and the Caribbean and Western Asia.³

¹ <http://iresearch.worldbank.org/PovcalNet/povDuplicateWB.aspx>.

² OPHI and UNDP. *Charting Pathways Out of Multidimensional Poverty: Achieving the SDGs*, 2020.

³ World Bank. *Poverty and Shared Prosperity 2020: Reversals of Fortune*, 2020.

The COVID-19 pandemic poses another serious challenge to ending poverty by 2030. It has dramatically dislocated the global economy, derailing progress on achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. In particular, it has provoked a major reversal in poverty reduction. Global extreme poverty rose in 2020 for the first time in over 20 years. An additional 119 million 124 million people were estimated to have fallen into extreme poverty in 2020, with the total expected to rise to 143 million-163 million in 2021, depending on the severity of the economic contraction resulting from the pandemic-related disruptions. The majority of the total new poor – more than four-fifths – are in middle-income countries. South Asia and sub-Saharan Africa are the most affected regions.⁴

In 2020, over 9 per cent of the world's population were likely living in extreme poverty as compared to the projected 7.9 per cent had the pandemic not happened. Consequently, achieving the target level of 3 per cent by 2030 to end extreme poverty will require significant, swift, and sustained action to ignite inclusive growth in countries where extreme poverty persists.

The COVID-19 crisis has also exacerbated food insecurity and exposed and worsened inequalities within and among countries. Women and youth have been particularly affected by job losses as the micro-, small and medium-sized enterprises they rely on as sources of employment and livelihoods have been shuttered by the pandemic. The pandemic makes the world's pledge to leave no one behind and to reach those furthest behind first much more difficult to achieve. It has laid bare the immense challenges facing the world, ranging from pervasive structural inequalities to inadequate health infrastructure and the lack of universal basic social protection.

The distance to travel to implement the Third United Nations Decade for the Eradication of Poverty (2018–2027), proclaimed by the General Assembly in its resolution 72/233, now appears especially daunting.⁵ The Assembly decided that the theme of the Third Decade shall be “Accelerating global actions for a world without poverty” in line with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The Assembly also requested the Secretary-General to develop an inter-agency, system-wide plan of action (SWAP) for poverty eradication to support global efforts to achieve the 2030 Agenda, accelerate global actions for a world without poverty and coordinate the efforts of the United Nations system.⁶

The SWAP aims to establish a common understanding of the challenge of eradicating poverty in all its forms and dimensions everywhere and specifies seven thematic areas that focus on actions that drive the structural transformations essential to sustained, inclusive and poverty-reducing growth. In designing the plan of action, important lessons were drawn from past experience of policy integration and emerging plans, including the implementation of the 2030 Agenda to strengthen the means of action of the United Nations system such as undertaking joint research, monitoring and reporting on the indicators for

⁴ <https://blogs.worldbank.org/opendata/updated-estimates-impact-covid-19-global-poverty-looking-back-2020-and-outlook-2021>.

⁵ United Nations General Assembly. *Implementation of the Third United Nations Decade for the Eradication of Poverty (2018–2027)*, Report of the Secretary-General, A/75/280, 30 July 2020.

⁶ <https://www.un.org/development/desa/socialperspectiveondevelopment/united-nations-decade-for-the-eradication-of-poverty/swap3rd.html>.

poverty eradication-related goals, dissemination of information, promoting integrated programmes, importance of having system focal points, capacity building and incentivizing planning for integrated programmes. It also underscores that in order to achieve the SDGs, the ability to work across United Nations agencies is essential. This plan of action was developed by a team of inter-agency focal points over the course of six months in 2018 and was discussed and considered by Member States during the seventy-third session of the General Assembly.

And moving forward, as the world enters the decade of action and delivery for sustainable development in the new context of the COVID-19 pandemic, the high-level segment of the 2020 session of the Economic and Social Council and the high-level political forum on sustainable development, convened under the auspices of the Council, proposed a ministerial declaration which noted that the trend of poverty is being reversed and reaffirmed that eradicating poverty in all its forms and dimensions, including extreme poverty, is the greatest global challenge and an indispensable requirement for sustainable development. The draft declaration also recognized that the poorest and the people in vulnerable situations are the most affected by the COVID-19 crisis, that a focus will be placed on those people in national and international policies and actions, and that every effort to leave no one behind and reach the furthest behind first will be undertaken.⁷

II. OBJECTIVES OF THE MEETING

Recognizing the urgency to end poverty and hunger everywhere by 2030, the Division for Inclusive Social Development of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs is organizing an inter-agency expert group meeting on “The Third United Nations Decade for the Eradication of Poverty (2018-2027)”, to be held virtually, from 24 to 27 May 2021, as part of the preparations for the seventy-sixth session of the United Nations General Assembly. The purpose of the meeting is to bring together experts from the United Nations system, government, academia, think tanks, as well as civil society organizations to discuss key questions related to the implementation of the United Nations system-wide plan of action for the Third United Nations Decade for the Eradication of Poverty, including the role that United Nations system can play to accelerate global actions for a world without poverty. In particular, they will:

- i) review the negative impacts of the COVID-19 crisis on the achievement of the SDGs, in particular poverty eradication and inequality reduction;
- ii) reflect on progress made and the gaps and challenges toward ending poverty in all its forms everywhere by 2030;
- iii) share country perspectives for better support from the United Nations system;
- iv) review lessons learnt from designing and implementing poverty eradication strategies at various levels that can be leveraged to spur further progress in those countries or regions lagging further behind and to contribute to the achievement of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development;
- v) discuss financing poverty eradication efforts;

⁷ https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/26780MD_2020_HLPF_HLS.pdf.

- vi) review the progress made by the UN system to get countries back on track and accelerate the implementation of the SWAP; and
- vii) propose inclusive social policies for building back better post-COVID-19 and accelerating poverty eradication and effectively implementing the Third United Nations Decade for the Eradication of Poverty (2018–2027).

The meeting will allow a robust exchange of ideas that contribute to achieving the objectives of the Third Decade. Invited experts will set the stage for the meeting by making presentations on global and regional recent trends in poverty and inequality. The interaction will foster the identification of actionable social and economic policies as well as encourage greater inter-agency convergence and collaboration within the United Nations system in sharing knowledge, promoting policy dialogue, facilitating synergies, mobilizing funds, providing technical assistance in the key policy and programmatic areas underlying the overarching objective of the 2030 Agenda of poverty eradication.

III. EXPECTED OUTCOMES

The meeting is expected to provide substantive input for the preparation of the report of the Secretary-General on the “Implementation of the Third United Nations Decade for the Eradication of Poverty (2018–2027)” to be submitted to the seventy-sixth session of the General Assembly. This includes assessing the gaps, challenges and progress made in the implementation of the Third Decade, including COVID-19-related aspects, effects and response. The meeting will also review and assess progress made implementing the inter-agency system-wide plan of action for poverty eradication.

The meeting will produce the following outputs:

- i. Substantive papers on the theme of the meeting, with concrete policy recommendations, prepared by experts;
- ii. Enhanced and better-informed dialogue between policy makers, the United Nations system and researchers on best practices for evidence-based policies related to eradicating poverty in all its forms and dimensions;
- iii. A report of the inter-agency expert group meeting, summarizing the key policy messages and recommendations to be included in Secretary-General’s Report.

IV. Organizational and administrative matters

In addition to inviting UN system focal points for the Third Decade, the Division for Inclusive Social Development of UNDESA will also identify and invite about 18 experts, taking into consideration gender and geographical balances.

Invited speakers are requested to provide brief background papers (approximately 5-10 pages, in English) to the United Nations Secretariat by Monday 17 May 2021 for distribution to other participants. Each background paper should address a specific agenda item and include a summary of the expert’s own research and evidence from other sources, as well as references to relevant parts of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. All sessions of the meeting will be in plenary and invited experts will lead-off discussions

of each session by presenting papers which will then be followed by in-depth plenary discussions. During the wrap-up session of the meeting, participants will outline the major conclusions and recommendations of the meeting. The Division for Inclusive Social Development will prepare a final report summarizing the discussions and key conclusions of the meeting.

Presenters are encouraged to prepare PowerPoint presentations and share them in advance with the organizers. All papers and presentations should be sent to **Ms. Meron Sherif** (sherif4@un.org) and **Ms. Hantamalala Rafalimanana** (rafalimanana@un.org) with a copy to **Mr. Joshua del Duca** (delduca@un.org).

V. Documentation and the Language of the meeting

The documentation of the meeting will be comprised of relevant publications, documents and materials related to the theme of the meeting. With participants' permission, the background papers and presentations will be posted on the Division for Inclusive Social Development's website.

The working language of the meeting will be English. Documentation for the meeting will also be provided in English.