



Sustainable and resilient recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic that promotes the economic, social and environmental dimensions of sustainable development: building an inclusive and effective path for the achievement of the 2030 Agenda in the context of the decade of action and delivery for sustainable development*

Summary

On the theme of the Economic and Social Council for 2021, the Committee stressed that the COVID-19 pandemic has jeopardized the possibility of countries achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. The aim of the recovery from this unprecedented and multidimensional crisis should not be to return to pre-crisis development patterns but to reframe development

towards equality, resilience and environmental sustainability. The Committee recommends action in four critical areas – the public health response to the COVID-19 pandemic; finance and debt relief; climate change; and social protection, including labour rights and education – and continues to support the reform of multilateral rules.

Recommendations

The Committee recommends that the Council urgently take stock of the lessons learned from the shortcomings of the multilateral and regional responses to COVID-19 and, in line with the calls for an inclusive and networked multilateralism, put in motion an open and transparent process to identify and implement the changes that will ensure that the system supports equitable, sustainable and resilient development

through structural transformation.¹ In the context of the current pandemic, which threatens to stall and even reverse progress made over the past decade by developing countries, including least developed countries, the Committee recommends that the Council call upon Member States and United Nations entities to consider the following priority areas:

¹ See Development Policy and Multilateralism after COVID-19 (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.20.II.A.2). Available at <https://www.un.org/development/desa/dpad/wp-content/uploads/sites/45/CDP-Covid-19-and-Multilateralism.pdf>.

* Excerpt from Committee for Development Policy, Report on the twenty-third session, See Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, 2021, Supplement No. 13 (E/2021/33)

Public health response

Rapid universal vaccinations and equitable distribution to ensure the most vulnerable countries are not once again left behind, as well as to ensure the rapid end of the COVID-19 pandemic. The protection enabled by universal vaccination, a global public good, requires not only financial support for the procurement of vaccines but new multilateral arrangements to mobilize global production and ensure equitable access to critical global goods (vaccines, treatment and diagnostics), removing obstacles created by intellectual property rights, adopting measures to promote the sharing of technology, and mobilizing and expanding production capacities. In that respect, the Committee endorses the proposals submitted to the World Trade Organization (WTO)

Finance and debt relief

Effective debt relief for developing countries, particularly least developed countries and those in debt distress, extending beyond the suspension of debt service payments and including compulsory participation by all relevant bilateral and private creditors, as well as financial support from multilateral institutions to facilitate debt restructuring. Debt relief and restructuring should not come at the expense of credit ratings;

Support for initiatives to create dedicated funds to address the economic consequences of COVID-19 and, more broadly, increased support by multilateral financial institutions for sustainable development on highly concessional terms, through the enhanced availability of resources and the capitalization of all multilateral financial institutions;

The doubling of resources for emergency support from the International Monetary Fund;

The issuance of new special drawing rights and efforts to ensure that unused rights are channeled for the benefit

Climate change

Commitments by countries under the Paris Agreement that are commensurate with its goal of limiting global warming to well below 2°C, and preferably to 1.5°C, above pre-industrial levels;

A significant increase in financial assistance and support for investments in climate adaptation and resilience-building, including local initiatives;

The adoption of improved measures to de-risk institutional

Council for Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights by India and South Africa for a waiver from certain provisions of the Agreement on Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS Agreement) in relation to prevention, containment and treatment of COVID-19;² such arrangements are urgently needed both in the context of the current pandemic and to allow the necessary policy space for countries to prepare for the threat of predicted future outbreaks of novel zoonotic diseases;

Dissemination of the lessons learned by developing countries, including least developed countries, that have successfully contained the spread of the virus through effective policy actions using public health measures;

of developing countries, in particular least developed countries. The Committee notes with satisfaction the progress in deliberations on this matter and urges the members of the International Monetary Fund to conclude the associated negotiations;

The restoration of levels of official development assistance (ODA) and the fulfilment of the commitments made by developed countries to provide the equivalent of 0.7 per cent of their gross national income in ODA;

The expansion and promotion of South-South cooperation;

Additional institutional investment that helps countries to build more resilient infrastructure, consistent with the Paris Agreement and the objectives of the 2030 Agenda. Debt relief and restructuring should also be linked to these objectives;

The creation of a global risk pooling reserve fund as an insurance mechanism against environmental and health risks across countries;

investment for green and climate-resilient infrastructure in a way that ensures the mobilization of private equity funds that would multiply the public funds invested; and the sharing of the benefits of such investments by local communities, as well as both public and private sectors. It will not be possible to meet the challenges of climate change adaptation, resilience-building and mitigation by relying solely on the funds available from multilateral sources;

² WTO Council for Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights, document IP/C/W/669.

Social protection, including labour rights and education

The strengthening of labour rights and social protection for all, with special consideration of informal sector workers, unpaid workers in the care economy, workers in the gig economy, the lowest paid and most vulnerable in global value chains and those unable to work, including through the promotion of a global fund to ensure universal social protection floors. Multinational corporations have a responsibility towards workers at all

levels of their global production chains and must respect labour rights and follow the UN Guidelines on Business and Human Rights.

Urgent action to reverse the dramatic effects of the pandemic on education, address digital inequalities, and take full advantage of the opportunities provided by the experiences with expanded and enhanced digital education during the pandemic.

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In its deliberations on the ECOSOC annual theme for 2021, the Committee found that the COVID-19 pandemic has jeopardized the possibility of countries achieving the SDGs. It found governments and the multilateral system unprepared to deliver on the fundamental objectives of protecting people's lives and ensuring their economic safety, and thereby exacerbated already severe inequalities and vulnerabilities. Recovery from this unprecedented and multidimensional crisis should not aim to return to pre-crisis development patterns but to reframe the development paradigm towards equality, resilience and environmental sustainability. In Chapter I of this report, the Committee calls for priority action in four critical areas: the public health response; finance and debt relief; climate change; and social protection, including labour rights and education. Chapter III, which discusses the particular challenges of LDCs in this context, and Chapter VIII, which reflects on the lessons learned from the voluntary national reviews presented in 2020, are integral parts of the CDP's advice to ECOSOC on its annual theme.

The Committee underscores the need to strengthen, in the narrative and policy advice on meeting the SDGs, the link between production structure and human development. A country's production structure is the strongest determinant of its level of income, its income distribution, the quality of employment, the quality of the environment, the development of its institutions, and its prospects for future growth and development. Although aspects of productive capacity are reflected in a small number of SDG targets, the importance of structural transformation as a path to sustainable development also needs to be reinforced. It is not enough for countries to ensure friendly business

environments. They need to actively promote the development of productive capacities in a way that will ensure flexibility and resilience in a rapidly changing global industrial and technological context. Accordingly, the CDP advocates that productive capacity should be the framework for the next programme of action for LDCs.

In their efforts to recover from the crisis, governments can steer the direction of economic growth. In a context in which many companies require public support, governments are especially well positioned to reshape public-private relations to produce a dynamic economic system where innovation and investment are geared at meeting people's needs and the protection of the planet. Public support, including corporate bailouts, should contain conditions to ensure that beneficiaries advance public interest; it should be refused to companies that persist in collectively damaging behaviour. The financial benefits from research and development that is publicly funded should not be restricted to the firm doing the innovation; where the financing and risks are shared with the public, so must the rewards be. Vaccines and access to education-enabling technology are cases in point in the COVID-19 context.

Policy space and support to the endeavours of countries to secure the kind of structural transformation that will enable them to meet the SDGs need to be at the core of multilateral priorities. In addition to the recommendations made in Chapter I, the Committee continues to support a reform of multilateral rules towards a system that promotes social and economic stability, shared prosperity and environmental sustainability.³

³ <https://www.un.org/development/desa/dpad/wp-content/uploads/sites/45/CDP-Covid-19-and-Multilateralism.pdf>