



Expert Group Meeting on  
“New research on inequality and its impacts”

United Nations Headquarters, New York  
12 and 13 September 2018

**Concept note**

**I. Background and purpose of the meeting**

Since 1952, the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA) has prepared the *Report on the World Social Situation*—with varying periodicity—as the United Nations flagship publication on social development issues. In 2017, the General Assembly encouraged the Secretary-General to “include best practices in the reduction of inequalities within and among countries in the Report on the World Social Situation 2019.”<sup>1</sup> With this in mind, Mr. Liu Zhenmin, Under-Secretary-General of DESA, has determined that the Report on the World Social Situation 2019 will focus on the links between inequality and other major global trends, including technological innovation, climate change, urbanization and international migration.

DESA has contributed to a solid knowledge base on major global social, economic and environmental trends and is well positioned to continue assessing their links to inequality. The 2019 report should allow the Department to integrate and showcase this knowledge base. DESA must however stay abreast of new and ongoing research on recent inequality trends and why they matter. In particular, there is growing academic interest on the social impacts of high and rising inequalities—namely on socioeconomic mobility—as well as on its political impacts. There is also an expanding information base on income dynamics and on non-economic dimensions of inequality. This recent research should set the foundation for the report’s analysis.

This expert meeting will serve to gather inputs from experts on inequality and its impacts to prepare for this important publication. Experts will present recent research on economic and other types of inequality as well as on their social and political costs. They will also make policy recommendations. The last session of the meeting will be devoted to discussing the outline of the Report on the World Social Situation 2019.

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<sup>1</sup> A/RES/72/141 of 19 December 2017, para.71.

## **II. Objectives and Key Questions**

The expert group meeting aims to review recent research on inequality and its impacts. To accomplish these objectives, the meeting will bring together experts from the research community, civil society and the UN system. To tap into recent research, presentations by the invited experts will focus on several key questions that include the following:

- How does income fluctuate throughout people’s lives in different settings? Why do people fall into poverty and how do they escape it?
- How does high or rising inequality affect socioeconomic mobility within and across generations?
- How is it affecting the “middle class”? Is it useful to define the middle class by more than income alone?
- What role, if any, do high or growing inequalities play in rising political discontent and declining trust in public institutions? What role does inequality play in influencing support for redistribution? And democracy?

The meeting should allow a robust exchange of ideas and lessons learned.

## **III. Expected outputs**

The Division for Inclusive Social Development (DISD) will prepare a short report of the outcomes of the meeting, based on substantive presentations by invited experts and interactive discussions. More importantly, the outcomes of the meeting should feed directly into the Report on the World Social Situation 2019.

## **IV. Organizational and administrative matters**

The Expert Group Meeting will be held at United Nations Headquarters in New York on 12 and 13 September 2018.

A number of experts have been identified and are being invited by DISD/DESA, taking into consideration gender and geographical balance. The Division will meet the costs related to the participation (travel and per diem) of all the invited experts from outside the United Nations system.

The Secretariat will provide a preliminary list of substantive issues that will be described in an annotated agenda of the expert group meeting. All presentations should be sent to **Ms. Maren Jiménez (jimenezm@un.org)** with a copy to **Ms. Julie Pewitt (pewitt@un.org)**. All invited experts are expected to arrive in New York on or before 12 September 2018 and to stay throughout the duration of the meeting. (Please note that the

authorized arrival date will be 11 September and the authorized departure date will be 14 September.)

In addition to the invited experts, staff members of DISD and staff from other divisions of DESA and United Nations entities will also participate in the meeting.

All sessions of the meeting will be in plenary. Presentations by invited experts will be followed by interactive discussions.

**V. Documentation and language of the meeting**

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