

Concept Note

**“Multilateralism as an essential tool
to reduce inequality within and among countries (SDG 10)”**

14 February 2019

13:15-14:30

**57th Session of the Commission for Social Development
United Nations Headquarters – NY**

Background:

The year 2020 will mark the 75th anniversary of the United Nations. As this milestone approaches, there is a widely shared sense that the sustainability of a rules-based international order cannot be taken for granted, that multilateralism is under threat. At the UN General Assembly last fall, world leaders and others repeatedly underscored the critical need for robust UN reform measures if the threats to multilateralism are to be averted. With the increasing concentration of wealth and power driving inequality, civil society advocates stressed the need for global economic governance reform that only a people-centered multilateralism can provide.

Reducing inequality within and among countries is now a stand-alone goal for the United Nations with the adoption of Sustainable Development Goal 10 in the UN’s 2030 Agenda. Recent research suggests that the rate of inequality in countries is a valuable proxy for national well-being.¹ While some countries have adopted SDG action plans that include policies to reduce domestic inequality, at the global level, changes to balance the economic and financial system are slow.

Sustainable Development Goal 10 on reducing inequality within and among nations will be among the goals to be reviewed at the High-level Political Forum under the auspices of the Economic and Social Council in July 2019. With growing questions regarding the role of multilateralism in a changing geopolitical environment, panelists will be invited to lead a discussion on the key role that the UN and other multilateral organizations should be playing to ensure that governments reverse disastrous trends in inequality and allow all of the world’s citizens to benefit from future growth and development, as called for in SDG8. The intersection between global economic governance and policies governing foreign-investment protection, cross-border financial flows, and intellectual property rights, as well as the lack of standards governing international taxation that exacerbate inequalities will be explored.

Panelists will also be asked to consider using the opportunity of the UN’s 75th anniversary in 2020 to further develop progressive improvements to global institutions and policy through a Summit dedicated for this purpose.

¹ Pickett, K.E., Wilkinson, R.G., 2015. Income inequality and health: A causal review, *Social Science & Medicine*, 316-326.

Title: Multilateralism as an essential tool to reduce inequality within and among countries (SDG10)

Date and Time: 14 February, 1:15 pm – 2:30 pm (Mon, Tue, or Wed)

Venue: UN HQ NY

Format: Interactive panel discussion; Q&A; rapporteur

Objectives: The priority theme for the 2019 CSOcD Session is "Addressing inequalities and challenges to social inclusion through fiscal, wage and social protection policies". Although Agenda 2030 recognizes the dramatic increase of inequality as a significant issue to be addressed through SDG10, the underlying structural dynamics exacerbating inequalities continue to accelerate. Moreover, with multilateral institutions under increasing threat, many Member States recognize that the UN must be significantly strengthened and further revitalized if the SDGs are to be achieved by 2030.

Panelists representing UN missions, UN agencies and civil society organizations will be invited to consider how international rules and global economic governance arrangements should be changed to counteract the increasing inequalities within countries and reducing inequalities between countries. Panelists will also be asked to consider how the opportunity of an event commemorating the UN's 75th anniversary may be used to develop synergies among the major UN reviews occurring in 2020 that would include a process of robust stocktaking and review to advance ambitious and achievable reforms of the Organization, particularly as it relates to SDG10 and macroeconomic policy.²

Outputs: A summary of the session will be circulated after the session.

Proposed Participants:

Moderator: Volker Lehmann, Senior Policy Analyst, FES

Speaker: PR or DPR

Speaker: Chantal Line Carpentier, Chief, UNCTAD NY Office

Speaker: Manuel F. Montes, Permanent Observer and Senior Advisor on Finance and Development, South Centre

Speaker: Regional/National CSO representative from global south

Speaker: Jeffery Huffines, Senior Advisor on UN2020, CIVICUS

Submitted by: Volker Lehmann, FES NY, on behalf of UN2020 co-sponsors FES NY, CIVICUS, WFM-IGP, Soroptimist International

² UN anniversaries and reviews in 2020 include renewed INDCs mandated by Paris Agreement, second 4-year cycle of HLPF/SDGs, Beijing+25, 20th anniversary of UNSCR 1325, Copenhagen+25, 2020 Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty Review Conference, Peacebuilding Commission 15 year review, UNCTAD 15, UN Human Rights Treaty Body review, Post-2020 Biodiversity Framework Conference, among others.