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# COMMISSION for SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

United Nations Headquarters, New York



**United Nations**

Department of  
Economic and  
Social Affairs



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## 60th Session of the Commission for Social Development (CSocD60)

**High-level panel discussion on emerging issues: “National policies and measures implemented by Member States to combat hunger and poverty in times of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic and beyond: Challenges to getting on track towards the full implementation of the 2030 Agenda”**

Wednesday, 9 February 2022 (10:00am – 12:00pm)  
Virtual

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### 1. Background

Pursuant to Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) decision in 2006, the Commission for Social Development has included an agenda item on ‘Emerging issues’ in its work programme. Under this agenda item, the Commission addresses issues affecting social development that require urgent consideration or new cross-cutting issues in the context of evolving global development challenges.

The Bureau of the Commission decided “National policies and measures implemented by Member States to combat hunger and poverty in times of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic and beyond: Challenges to getting on track towards the full implementation of the 2030 Agenda” as the theme of “Emerging issues” of its 60th session. This topical focus, echoing the theme of the 2022 High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development, is integral to the Commission’s effort to align its work with that of ECOSOC and the HLPF. The selection of the topic also acknowledges the significant role played by national emergency measures and policies in mitigating the worst effects of the crisis, especially on the most vulnerable populations, to combat poverty and hunger.

### 2. Context – National policies and measures to combat hunger and poverty in times of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic and beyond

The socio-economic fallout of the COVID-19 pandemic has been immense. The pandemic has caused a massive loss in working hours, threatening people’s livelihoods and wellbeing, and deepening poverty and hunger. Fragmented social protection measures, inefficient delivery

systems, and inadequate attention to gender-responsiveness, were some of the major impediments to protecting people when they needed it the most. School closures have threatened to deepen inequality in access to education.

To counter these adverse impacts, Member States took swift measures at the national and sub-national levels. For example, many countries have leveraged economic measures to support sectors and individuals hardest hit by the crisis. Many instituted tax relief and VAT exemptions as a means of boosting the disposable income of low-income households. Others introduced debt relief and interest-free loans to vulnerable businesses and households.

Social protection measures have expanded exponentially since the onset of the COVID-19 crisis. 18% of global stimulus packages were spent on social protection measures. Total spending on social protection rose by almost 270% between December 2020 and May 2021, reaching \$2.9 trillion (or 3% of global GDP in 2021). Countries responded to protect household food security through in-kind food or vouchers schemes and school feeding and child feeding programmes.

Among social assistance measures, cash transfer measures are the instrument of choice for most governments. Almost 17% of the world's population has benefited from at least one Covid-related cash transfer payment between 2020 and 2021. Most cash transfer schemes are new schemes (69%), while the remainder corresponds to the scaling up or adaptation of existing schemes. Existing social protection programmes were expanded both vertically (additional benefits to existing beneficiaries) and horizontally (extending the coverage of existing programmes to new beneficiaries). In many countries where they exist, unemployment insurance schemes have provided significant and rapid response through income support to laid-off workers. In some countries, the delivery of social assistance was simplified and brought closer to beneficiaries. Some worked to expand their social register and national identification systems. Countries also leveraged digital technologies to support the identification and enrolment of beneficiaries, as well as the disbursement of cash transfers.

Active Labour Market Policies and labour regulations surged. The range of instruments employed include public works programmes, job retention schemes (including wage subsidies), training measures, and shorter work time. Many countries have also put in place targeted interventions to support small businesses and the self-employed. These include wage subsidies, tax deferment, financial subsidies, advantageous loans and credit, and deferring, reducing, or waiving social security contributions.

Ensuring universal access to basic services and infrastructure is essential for an inclusive and equitable recovery and a key factor for eradicating poverty. In this regard, countries made efforts to ensure that distance learning opportunities are also available offline (through television, radio, print) in regions with limited connectivity to sustain learning continuity. Many countries have injected significant additional resources into the health sector. E-health is playing an increasingly essential role in the achievement of universal health coverage. Countries have also been placing greater emphasis on support to mental health, as mental health disorders have increased during the crisis. Countries took steps to sustain access to clean water during the pandemic to support sanitation and hygiene standards. To support access to decent housing, countries established eviction moratoriums, rent stabilization, and tax moratoriums for landowners.

### **3. Objectives**

Drawing on a Note by the Secretariat on Emerging Issues and the insights of experts, the objective of the panel is to share national experiences and identify policies and measures that have proven to be effective in addressing poverty and food insecurity in times of COVID-19 pandemic and beyond and. It will also draw lessons learned during the pandemic and identify common challenges to getting back on track towards the full implementation of the 2030 Agenda. The outcome of the panel discussion will be a unique contribution to the 2022 High-Level Political Forum and the ECOSOC high-level segment.

More specifically, the panel aims to:

- a) Discuss how national policies and measures are helping to combat poverty and hunger and get back on track to achieving SDG 1 and SDG 2 by 2030, showcasing successful outcomes and promising solutions to mitigate the negative impacts of COVID-19 and protect people from poverty and food insecurity.
- b) Examine lessons how these national policies and measures to tackle poverty and food insecurity could best be designed, implemented, monitored, and evaluated.
- c) Explore further mechanisms for sharing of successful policies and measures to tackle poverty and hunger at global, regional, and sub-regional levels.
- d) Explore how the Commission could continue and enhance its role in empowering people, promoting inclusive and equitable recovery, and contributing to the building of more inclusive and resilient societies and sustainable development.

### **4. Structure and format of the panel discussion**

The high-level panel discussion on emerging issues will be chaired by the Chair of the Commission for Social Development. The Chair will open the panel with brief remarks and introduce the Moderator. The Moderator will introduce the panellists and invite them to make presentations. Following their presentations, the moderator will invite questions directly related to the presentations from the audience/participants and open the floor for interactive dialogue.

Panellists are expected to structure their presentations around effective social policies and concrete and innovative strategies to address poverty and food insecurity in their efforts to enable an inclusive and equitable recovery and to highlight innovative approaches and lessons learned.

Highlights and outcomes of the panel discussion will be reflected in the Chair's summary. The summary will be used to prepare inputs of the Commission for Social Development to the ECOSOC, in particular, the high-level segment of the ECOSOC and the 2022 High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development under the theme "Building back better from the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) while advancing the full implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development".

### **5. Guiding questions**

The Commission for Social Development may wish to consider the following questions in its deliberations:

- What national policies and measures have been effective to combat hunger and poverty during and post COVID-19 that support a more inclusive and resilient recovery and protect the poorest and the most vulnerable?

- What are the common challenges countries face and how they can address them to get back on track towards the full implementation of the 2030 Agenda?
- What are the lessons learned from emergency policies and measures implemented during the crisis to tackle poverty and hunger?
- How can successful measures and policies be (1) scaled up nationally and (2) shared with other countries through mutual learning processes and the exchange of good practices, especially, in the field of socio-economic policies, the provision of basic services, and social protection measures?

## 6. Time Allocation

Speaker	Suggested Time
Chair: Opening remarks and the introduction of the moderator	5 minutes
Moderator: introduction/context-setting	5 minutes
Panellists (5): Presentations	7 minutes per panellist
Moderated interactive discussion	Q&A and open dialogue with participants of the Commission (Interventions limited to 3 minutes per speaker) (45 minutes)
Concluding remarks by moderator and Closing by the Chair	10 minutes
	Total: 2 hours