

2018 ECOSOC Integration Segment

1-3 May 2018

Innovative communities: leveraging technology and innovation to build sustainable and resilient societies

DRAFT CONCEPT NOTE

Background

The Economic and Social Council has been assigned a key role in the integration of the economic, social and environmental dimensions of sustainable development, in the outcome document of the Rio+20 Conference and by General Assembly resolution 68/1. In the latter, the General Assembly decided that the Council should hold an annual Integration Segment to promote the integration of the three dimensions, both within and beyond the United Nations system. The main functions of the segment are to: (a) consolidate the inputs of Member States, the subsidiary bodies of the Council, the United Nations system and other relevant stakeholders; (b) promote the balanced integration of the three dimensions of sustainable development; and (c) bring together the key messages from the ECOSOC system on the main theme and develop action-oriented recommendations for follow up.

Under the theme *“Innovative communities: leveraging technology and innovation to build sustainable and resilient societies”* the 2018 Integration Segment will bring together key stakeholders – Member States, the United Nations system, other international organizations, the private sector, academia and civil society organizations – to assess the status of integration and coherence of actions towards achieving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The Segment’s proceedings will inform the 2018 ECOSOC High-level Segment and the 2018 High-level political forum (HLPF) under the auspices of ECOSOC, to take place in July 2018.

In 2018, the Integration Segment is also part of a series of events that will examine options for leveraging technology and innovation to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals, including the annual session of the UN Commission on Science and Technology for Development (14-18 May 2018), the second edition of the AI for Good Summit (15-17 May 2018), and the Multi-Stakeholder Forum on Science, Technology and Innovation for the SDGs (5-6 June 2018). The Programme of the Segment, will, therefore, be developed in close collaboration with the secretariats of these events.

Objectives

The 2018 Integration Segment will seek to analyse pathways to build resilience through integrated policies, with a view to ensuring that progress made in advancing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) will “shift the world onto a sustainable and resilient path”¹, leaving no one behind. To fulfil this purpose, the Segment will:

- (1) discuss how policy makers can use integrated policy approaches to enhance resilience and inclusion as key enablers to achieve the 2030 Agenda at the national, regional and global levels;
- (2) serve as a platform for exchange of best practices on how technology and innovation can be leveraged as tools to effectively design a resilient future, while leaving no one behind;
- (3) showcase policy instruments and mechanisms that support risk management and reduction across the hazard spectrum, including external shocks and natural disasters;

¹ A/RES/70/1. Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

- (4) discuss how technology and innovation, particularly pro-poor and gender-sensitive solutions, can support efforts to strengthen the resilience of public policy and governance structures through inclusiveness, participation and transparency with the view to fostering sustainable and resilient societies.

United Nations Member States will have the opportunity to present integrated policies that governments and partners have pursued to strengthen resilience, including options for maximizing the benefits and minimizing the risks of new technologies for sustainable and resilient societies, in line with the 2030 Agenda. The work of the ECOSOC system and wider UN system towards this end will also be featured in the analytical inputs and discussions.

Scope

The term ‘resilience’ describes the ability to recover from or adjust easily to calamity or change. Building resilience is thus a multidimensional challenge and a cross-cutting issue that will impact progress towards the SDGs and the achievement of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

As shocks occur, the severity of their impact on society and the environment depend on the level of preparedness across multiple areas, including urban planning and infrastructure, food security, economic structures, and the way health systems and public institutions are designed. These sudden, disruptive events, caused by internal or external factors, expose countries’ vulnerabilities in their economic, social, political, environmental and institutional structures, as well as vulnerabilities resulting from their geographic situation. Such shocks include economic crises, natural disasters and other environmental- or climate-related events, and health-related occurrences. Moreover, in a globalized world the impact of any such occurrences can spread beyond national borders, and therefore requires a global response. Consequently, building a resilient future for their societies poses challenges to all Member States regardless of their level of development. Yet, countries with high exposure to risk and weak structural resilience, such as least developed countries, small island developing states, and African countries, are particularly vulnerable to exogenous shocks.

Shocks hamper countries’ efforts to shift towards and pursue sustainable development objectives. Extreme weather events, such as those that hit the Caribbean region in 2017, can reverse development gains for decades. While infrastructure losses are the most visible effects of natural disasters, the latter disrupt services at large with impacts on the economy, food security, biodiversity, health and education systems. Furthermore, public health crises, such as the Ebola outbreak or the Zika virus epidemic, have put the international community to the test for responding effectively to cross-border health and related emergencies. In addition, debt service traps several low- and middle-income countries for decades, as well as high-income countries in the most recent debt crises episodes, hindering their capacity to finance productive capital and thus sustainable development strategies. Correspondingly, rising inequalities and populist stances challenge the political and social fabric of societies across the globe and reveal a trust deficit particularly in political institutions.

As countries strive to mitigate vulnerabilities and better prepare for a wide range of hazards, context-sensitive technology and inclusive innovation, particularly pro-poor and gender-sensitive solutions, can serve as critical tools to support the improvement of livelihoods in the short-term, and shift societies on a sustainable and resilient path in the long-term. Furthermore, foresight techniques can support policy makers in planning for different scenarios for the future, identifying trends that go well beyond today’s risk landscape. The analysis of financial transaction data, for example, helps to understand the economic resilience of people at risk of being affected by natural disasters, and consequently to target emergency

response and estimate economic loss at the local level in the wake of a disaster.² E-identity services allow access to online public services wherever citizens are located, and e-governance tools can foster citizen participation.

Cities across the globe are already using artificial intelligence enabled solutions and the Internet of Things to increase the efficiency of local transportation systems, water management and public safety, among other areas. As technology is leveraged to build ‘smart’ infrastructure, ensuring the safety of digitally connected communities, including through ‘cyber-resilience’, is increasingly important. Risk management therefore needs to go hand in hand with technological progress, to reap the benefits of the latter for building truly sustainable and resilient societies. In this regard, the 2018 Integration Segment will invite innovative solutions from the national, regional and global levels on ways to effectively enhance resilience and manage risks through technology and foresight techniques, with a particular focus on the most vulnerable.

The Segment will be organized in close collaboration with DESA-DSD, ITU, UNCTAD, WIPO, UNISDR and OSAA, as well as draw on the wealth of expertise of the ECOSOC subsidiary bodies.

Format and participants

The Segment will be chaired by H.E. Mr. Mahmamin Mahmaminov (Tajikistan), Vice-President of ECOSOC. Over the course of three days, the Segment will feature an opening session with eminent personalities, roundtable sessions and panels, as well as a General Debate. Each panel or roundtable discussion will be moderated and will include open floor interactive exchanges. Various side events, organized by UN Member States, the United Nations system and other stakeholders, will offer additional opportunities to showcase innovative solutions to promote resilience and enhance inclusion. The programme will include a general debate, allowing Member States to present their experiences and share their national perspectives on the issue of leveraging technology and innovation to build sustainable and resilient societies.

The Segment will highlight best practices and lessons learned by Member States, the UN system and other relevant stakeholders, presenting experiences with integrated policies aimed at building resilience in light of 2030 Agenda implementation. Participants will include Ministers of Government, senior policy makers, Parliamentarians, private sector, academia and UN system representatives, alongside representatives of Major Groups. Eminent speakers will include Heads of State or Government with best practices to share in this area.

Documentation

The discussions will benefit from a Conference Room Paper reflecting the substantive inputs from Member States, the UN system and ECOSOC subsidiary bodies, on the theme of the 2018 Integration Segment.

Outcome

The main outcome of the Segment will be a summary by the ECOSOC Vice-President, highlighting policy recommendations and providing guidance on implementing the 2030 Agenda through policy

² <https://www.unglobalpulse.org/projects/using-financial-transaction-data-measure-economic-resilience-natural-disasters>

integration and addressing the interlinkages between the SDGs. The summary will be transmitted to the President of ECOSOC for consideration by Member States in the 2018 ECOSOC High-level Segment and the High-level political forum under the auspices of ECOSOC. Relevant policy recommendations contained in the summary may be reflected in the Ministerial Declaration as the main outcome document at the culmination of the ECOSOC cycle.

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