

ECOSOC Preparatory Meeting

26 – 27 March 2018, Prague

“Towards sustainable, resilient and inclusive societies through participation of all”

Concept Note

Background

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development underlines that fostering inclusive societies based on strong and transparent institutions is an indispensable requirement for sustainable development. In SDG16, the international community commits to promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels. The importance of participation for sustainable development is highlighted in target 16.7, which calls for responsive, inclusive, participatory, and representative decision-making at all levels.

The need for an integrated participatory approach across the economic, social and environmental dimensions of the 2030 Agenda is embedded in the Addis Ababa Action Agenda, the Paris Agreement on Climate Change, the New Urban Agenda and the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction, which together represent a comprehensive normative roadmap for the future of humankind and bear testimony to the positive impact of inclusive decision-making that involves all relevant stakeholders.

To explore further collective action in addressing issues of participation and inclusion within the context of the 2030 Agenda and various emerging challenges, the President of ECOSOC will hold an ECOSOC Special Meeting at UN Headquarters, in May 2018, to which the ECOSOC Preparatory Meeting will provide substantive inputs. As part of the President’s initiative, four breakfast meetings have been convened at the Bohemian National Hall in New York, with the aim to bring together all relevant stakeholders to share best practices and experiences on ways to foster sustainable, resilient and inclusive societies through participation of all.

The breakfast meetings highlighted: the critical role that civil society organizations can play as amplifiers of the 2030 Agenda at all levels and the need for institutionalized platforms of engagement for all relevant groups; that local governments are ideally placed to support Agenda implementation by responding to local needs, catalysing local innovation and promoting a territorial approach to development; the need for strategies to incentivize private sector engagement for the SDGs, including by encouraging a “race to the top” with regards to sustainability; the necessity to strengthen the interface between academia and policy makers to devise actionable policy recommendations, informed by evidence, to foster sustainable, resilient and inclusive societies. Overall, the discussions at the breakfast meetings provide a strong conceptual frame and pragmatic thinking for the Prague Preparatory Meeting, ensuring that the voices of all stakeholders are being heard.

Objectives

The Preparatory Meeting will offer a platform for UN Member States and relevant stakeholders to discuss participation as a crosscutting endeavor for the achievement of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The meeting will showcase approaches to foster participation in various country contexts and sectors, including in education, economic development and good governance, with the aim to identify positive practices that can be replicated, scaled-up and/or applied to advance inclusion and participation at all levels. The meeting will also highlight emerging technologies and other instruments that can foster sustainable, resilient and inclusive societies and increase participation in the implementation of the SDGs.

With this in view, the main objectives of the Preparatory Meeting will be to:

- highlight the critical role of stakeholder participation, good governance and strong and inclusive institutions for the achievement of the 2030 Agenda;
- showcase positive practices and policy approaches to advance the 2030 Agenda that foster sustainable, resilient and inclusive societies at the global, regional, national and local levels;
- provide a platform for an interactive dialogue on the role of civil society organisations, local government, private sector, academia and other relevant stakeholders in fostering sustainable, resilient and inclusive societies;
- identify pathways to strengthen institutional frameworks for increased participation and stakeholder engagement in development processes and decision-making.

Date and Venue

The preparatory meeting will be held on 26 March 2018, at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Czech Republic in Prague. On 27 March 2018, a field trip to the city of Kolín (50 km from Prague) will be organized.

Format

The opening addresses on 26 March 2018, will be delivered by Government representatives of the Czech Republic, the host country, and Colombia, the co-hosting country. Both countries will draw on their historical experience of transition, and share the successes and lessons learned from past and current approaches to building sustainable and inclusive societies.

Following the opening session, the President of the UN General Assembly, the President of ECOSOC and the Deputy Secretary-General of the United Nations will engage in a high-level panel discussion on achieving the 2030 Agenda through participation of all.

In two following sessions, representatives of government, civil society organizations, the private sector and academic institutions will showcase approaches to participation from across the globe, sharing experiences and lessons learned from implementation. Participants will be invited to engage in an interactive discussion that will be supported by technology and innovations in participatory methods.

On 27 March 2018, participants will be invited to take part in a trip to the city of Kolín, one of the leading cities in adopting participatory approaches to local government in the Czech Republic. The visit will provide the opportunity to witness concrete examples of policy action on sustainable, resilient and inclusive societies at a local level.

Outcome

The main outcome of the Preparatory Meeting will be a President's Summary, which will be used as an input for the 2018 ECOSOC substantive session and the 2018 High-level Political Forum, held under the auspices of ECOSOC. Additional outcomes of the Preparatory Meeting will include a manual of best practices and case studies presented at the meeting, as well as recommendations for further analysis and concrete follow-up actions to support sustainable, resilient and inclusive societies and foster participation of all.