



The High-level Segment of the United Nations Economic and Social Council

***Friday 19 July 2019
10:00 to 17:30
ECOSOC Chamber***

Concept Note

Background

The work of the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) and its subsidiary bodies support the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), contributing to the follow-up and review process at the high-level political forum on sustainable development (HLPF).. The ECOSOC High-level Segment is a culmination of the ECOSOC annual cycle.

General Assembly (GA) resolution [72/305](#) reaffirmed the continued need for the distinctive space provided by the High-level Segment and identified new focus for the segment. In particular, the GA decided that the High-level Segment of ECOSOC “*will focus on future trends and scenarios related to the Council theme, the long-term impact of current trends, such as contribution of new technologies, in the economic, social and environmental areas on the realization of the SDGs based on the work of the UN and other regional and international organizations and bodies as well as other stakeholders. It should aim at enhancing knowledge-sharing and regional and international cooperation*”. In addition, resolution [72/305](#) decided that the themes of the segments of ECOSOC should focus on a particular aspect of the main theme of ECOSOC and the HLPF.

The High-level Segment is held the day after the HLPF, allowing for a broadening of the discussion around the 2030 Agenda and enabling Member States to look further ahead. The Davos-style roundtables will welcome speakers from Governments and international organizations that have produced long-term planning documents, scenarios or projections for the timeline of the 2030 Agenda and beyond.

Substantive Focus

The 2019 High-level Segment of ECOSOC will thus focus on future-oriented trends, projections and scenarios addressing the most relevant issues around the SDGs, both in general and with regard to the theme of ECOSOC “Empowering people and ensuring inclusiveness and equality”. The focus on future trends and scenarios impacting the SDGs is of particular importance, as the findings of the *United Nations World Economic Situation and Prospects 2019* reveal that even though global economic growth appears stable, it is masking underlying risks and imbalances, and concealing fragilities and setbacks in many developing economies.¹ Inequalities are growing, as many low-income earners have not seen any growth

¹ https://www.un.org/development/desa/dpad/wp-content/uploads/sites/45/WESP2019_BOOK-web.pdf



in their disposable income for many years and more than half the world population has no access to social protection. This situation pushes the targets of eradicating poverty and creating decent jobs for all further from reach, and also impacts the achievement of other SDGs.

In this regard, the focus of the High-level Segment on possible scenarios and future trends that will impact the implementation of the 2030 Agenda complements the work of the HLPF, as well as the various intergovernmental and other bodies related to ECOSOC, which examine the current state of implementation and possible solutions for advancement. The segment will focus on whether the SDGs will be achieved if current trends continue, leading to a discussion on policy actions that could be taken to address trends with a negative impact and to accelerate progress. An examination of future trends will also enable the Council to make a unique contribution to policymaking on issues that are not usually considered from a long-term perspective. The theme of ECOSOC includes several dimensions, including trends and scenarios related to inequality, and trends and scenarios related to participation of people in decision making. The High-level Segment will take into account the work of the ECOSOC cycle, notably events, forums, side events and expert group meetings related to ECOSOC, as well as messages from the sessions of the ECOSOC subsidiary bodies.

Format of the morning session (10:00 -13:00)

The morning session of the ECOSOC High-level Segment will consider possible scenarios and trends in selected areas and how they impact the implementation of the SDGs, and focus on whether the SDGs will be achieved if current trends continue. It will generate recommendations for policy actions that could be taken to address trends with a negative impact and to accelerate progress. An examination of future trends will also enable the Council to facilitate the link between researchers and policymakers and contribute to policymaking on issues that are not usually considered from a long-term perspective.

The Secretary-General's report entitled "*Long-term impact of current trends in the economic, social and environmental areas on the realization of the Sustainable Development Goals*" ([E/2019/66](#)) will provide background, with an integrated analysis of the long-term trends. The session could draw on the Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs) presented at the HLPF in identifying specific trends that have a particular impact on the SDGs. It could also draw from the [Secretary-General's letter to the G-20](#), which identified critical trends for the future: implementing the 2030 Agenda for sustainable development; financing for sustainable development; climate action; sustainable food future; gender equality and empowerment of women; the future of work and migrants and refugees. The session might also consider longer-term visions such as Africa's Agenda 2063, the ASEAN Economic Community's Blueprint 2025, and Europe 2050, as well as the experiences of Member States that have developed long-term national plans.

Proposed guiding questions

- What transformational changes are crucial for achieving the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs?
- How can future trends and scenarios influence the course of SDG implementation?



Format of the afternoon session (15:00 -17:30)

The afternoon session of the 2019 High-level Segment of ECOSOC will focus on future-oriented trends, projections and scenarios around the SDGs in connection with the ECOSOC theme of “Empowering people and ensuring inclusiveness and equality”. The theme encompasses several dimensions, including trends and scenarios related to inequality, and trends and scenarios related to participation of people in decision making. The report of the Secretary General on the 2019 ECOSOC theme ([E/2019/65](#)) will provide background for the session.

The findings of the *United Nations World Economic Situation and Prospects 2019* reveal that even though global economic growth appears stable, it is masking underlying risks and imbalances, and concealing fragilities and setbacks in many developing economies. Inequalities are growing, as many low-income earners have not seen any growth in their disposable income for many years and more than half the world population has no access to social protection. This situation pushes the targets of eradicating poverty and creating decent jobs for all further from reach, and also impacts the achievement of other SDGs.

The roundtable discussion will address trends related to the empowerment of people, including the poorest and most vulnerable. It will aim to reflect on future trends related to inclusive institutions as well as trends related to ensuring responsive, inclusive, participatory and transparent decision-making.

In addition, the session will also examine trends related to inequalities and the implications of rising inequality in the long run. The discussions could draw upon relevant work on inequalities, institutions and participation. It could also include examples from the Voluntary National Reviews to identify driving forces behind national inequalities, such as the impacts of conflict, migration, non-inclusive economic growth and environmental degradation.

Proposed guiding questions

- How can future trends in economy, society, public institutions and technology be used to empower people, engage them in decision-making and maximize benefits through shared prosperity?
- What do inequalities mean for countries in special situations, including fragile countries and vulnerable groups?