

**2021 ECOSOC Partnership Forum**  
***“Partnerships as Game Changer for a Sustainable Recovery from COVID-19”***

Monday, 3 May 2021, Virtual meeting  
9:00 – 11:00 am

Concept Note

The ECOSOC Partnership Forum is organized annually to discuss the role of partnerships in driving sustainable development. As outlined in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, partnerships are essential for achieving all the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and mobilizing the related commitment, efforts, finance, technology and data.

With only ten years left to achieve the SDGs, the 2021 ECOSOC Partnership Forum will provide policy space for Member States, non-state stakeholders and the UN development system to focus on key cross-cutting and interlinked issues that are central to accelerating the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and for discussing ways to mobilize multi-stakeholder partnerships to galvanize synergistic actions. The Forum also aims to showcase a number of successful partnerships that are accelerating the achievement of the SDGs.

***Background***

The COVID-19 pandemic has been ravaging the world with profound negative impacts on the sustainable development trajectories of countries at all development stages. Research suggests that some of the hard-won development gains of the past couple of decades could possibly be reversed; the world gross product fell by an estimated 4.3 per cent in 2020; some 100 million more people could be pushed into extreme poverty and hunger; and approximately 1.6 billion people in informal sector are at the verge of losing their livelihoods.

In response to the pandemic, the UN Secretary-General has called for the following efforts: (i) take coordinated actions at the global level to suppress the pandemic, including by supporting the health systems in countries that are most at risk; (ii) promote comprehensive responses to tackle the devastating socio-economic consequences, focused on the most vulnerable countries and peoples; and (iii) build back better with a view to ensuring sustainability and resilience.

Governments alone cannot meet the unprecedented challenges the world is facing both now and in the years to come. Multi-stakeholder partnerships are at the core of responding to the pandemic crisis and its impacts in a way that supports the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the Paris Agreement on Climate Change and the Addis Ababa Action Agenda on Financing for Development.

Over the past months, several new partnerships have been launched in response to the COVID-19 pandemic and a number of existing partnerships have also re-focused their efforts to support the response to the pandemic and its impacts, including in such areas as health and vaccine development, providing open access to knowledge, leveraging digital technologies and providing low-cost

innovations and technology solutions, mobilizing resources, and minimizing the impact of the pandemic in developing countries.

In line with the theme of the 2021 High-level Political Forum (HLPF) which focuses on "Sustainable and resilient recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic"<sup>1</sup>, the 2021 ECOSOC Partnership Forum will focus on the critical role of multi-stakeholder partnerships in achieving the SDGs following the outbreak of the COVID-19 global pandemic, from a whole-of-a-society approach. The discussions will also examine how partnerships can help finance the SDGs and support recovery from COVID-19, including by investments in sustainable infrastructure; and how they can harness science, technology and innovation in support of sustainable development.

In 2021, the ECOSOC Partnership Forum will be held virtually on Monday, 3 May, back to back with the Multi-Stakeholder Forum on Science, Technology and Innovation for the Sustainable Development Goals (STI Forum) (4-5 May) and Development Cooperation Forum (DCF) (6-7 May). This will present a unique opportunity to promote further synergy and coherence between these closely related fora. It will also help to effectively inform the High-level Political Forum on sustainable development (HLPF) and other key meetings.

To organize the 2021 ECOSOC Partnership Forum, UN DESA will engage relevant UN system entities and other actors, including the United Nations Office for Partnership (UNOP), United Nations Global Compact (UNGC), the International Chamber of Commerce (ICC), and others.

### **Format**

The **two-hour** long Forum will be held virtually due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. It will be opened by a keynote speech to set the stage for the discussions, followed by **substantive dialogue** and a closing. The discussions will be interactive and Member States and other stakeholders who so wish will be able to submit their statements to the secretariat in advance for posting on the Forum's website.

### **Thematic focus**

Under the overall theme of "**Partnerships as Game Changer for a Sustainable Recovery from COVID-19**", the 2021 ECOSOC Partnership Forum will focus on the potential of partnerships in helping societies rebuild from the COVID-19 pandemic and reversing the worsening trend of poverty and other vulnerabilities, transforming economies and leveling up societies so as to realize the vision of the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs.

### **Participants**

Participants will include representatives of Member States, UN system entities, relevant inter-governmental organizations, multilateral development banks, NGOs, the private sector,

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<sup>1</sup> 2021 HLPF Theme is "Sustainable and resilient recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic that promotes the economic, social and environmental dimensions of sustainable development: building an inclusive and effective path for the achievement of the 2030 Agenda in the context of the decade of action and delivery for sustainable development" and it will review implementation of SDGs 1, 3, 8, 10, 12, 13, 16 and 17 .

think-tanks and scientific communities, philanthropic organizations, local governments, parliaments, academia and other stakeholders. It will feature major impactful partnerships and lessons learned.

### *Impacts*

A summary will be prepared to capture the key policy messages of the Forum. The summary will serve as an input to the 2021 HLPF and other key inter-governmental processes.

The 2021 ECOSOC Partnership Forum will also be an opportunity to solicit new **SDG Acceleration Actions** by national governments and diverse non-state actors and have them registered on the dedicated online database maintained by DESA at: (<https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/sdgactions>).

### *Background documents*

- United Nations, "[The Future We Want, The United Nations We Want](#)", Sept, 2020, New York.
- Political declaration of the high-level political forum on sustainable development convened under the auspices of the General Assembly ([A/RES/74/4](#));
- [UN DESA Policy Brief Series](#)
- United Nations, "[Shared Responsibility, Global Solidarity: Responding to the Socio-economic Impacts of COVID-19](#)", New York, March 2020.
- "The Future is Now: Science for Achieving Sustainable Development," Global Sustainable Development Report, 2019 ([2019 GSDR](#));
- UN DESA Working Paper No. 169, "Beyond the Business Case: The Strategic Role of the Private Sector in Transforming the Real Economy Towards an Inclusive, Green and Circular Future." ([ST/ESA/2020/DWP/169](#)), June 2020.
- UN DESA: [Compendium of Digital Government Initiatives in response to the COVID-19 Pandemic 2020](#), Sept. 2020