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United Nations Economic and Social Council

TAKING ACTION TO IMPROVE LIVES

Opening Statement by

**Her Excellency MARIE CHATARDOVA
President of the Economic and Social Council**

**Special meeting ‘Towards sustainable,
resilient and inclusive societies
through participation of all’**

UN Headquarters, New York, 23 May 2018

**Excellencies,
Distinguished Delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

I have the honour to welcome you to the 2018 Special Meeting of the Economic and Social Council on “Towards sustainable, resilient and inclusive societies through participation of all.”

At the beginning of my tenure as the President of ECOSOC, I chose this issue as the key priority of my Presidency in 2018.

Economic, social and political marginalization are often interlinked. Societies in which groups are systematically excluded from political or economic life risk reversing hard-won development gains. On the other hand, inclusive political, social and economic systems, are more dynamic and better able to achieve sustainable development at all levels.

It is evident across the globe that in the era of increased globalization, today’s societies are faced with diverse, complex, and interconnected challenges. Climate change, urbanisation, disaster risk, forced migration, and socio-economic inequalities within and among countries are some of the most prominent issues affecting us all.



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To successfully cope with these new interlinked uncertainties, it is critical to unpack them as well as shed light on their interactions. This is the only way to identify the policy instruments that will have a long-term positive impact and truly create resilient and inclusive communities.

Excellencies,

Today's Special Meeting is not the beginning of the conversation. In keeping with the spirit of inclusiveness of the 2030 Agenda a series of breakfast meetings with different stakeholder groups took place in New York, followed by a preparatory meeting held in Prague. The deliberations and outputs of those meetings have informed preparations for today's event.

The morning meeting - held in November 2017 - provided a platform to non-governmental organizations to discuss innovative experiences that foster people's participation and involve civil society in decision-making.

The message that mechanisms for engagement of all actors need to be strengthened and institutionalized came strong from the meeting.

The second meeting took place in January, and brought together decision makers from various walks of life to explore the wide range of platforms and approaches for participation in decision making at the local level.

The meeting stressed the importance of local governments in promoting awareness about the SDGs among local communities and mobilizing all stakeholders in their implementation.

In January, we also had the third meeting with representatives of approximately 15 private sector entities and Member States engaging in a candid and focused discussion on the role of the private sector in the process.

While underscoring the need to strengthen mutual trust between the public and private sector, participants also agreed that "principled" business models can make concrete contributions to the efforts towards building more resilient and inclusive societies.

The fourth and final meeting was held in March and engaged academia and Member States. The objective was to advance a conceptual framework for the Special Meeting based on research as well as best practices to help elaborate actionable policy recommendations.



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In ensuring that no one is left behind, academic institutions can play a vital role in providing quality and timely disaggregated data in support of the SDGs and their targets as well as support good governance and contribute to public policy making at all levels.

Last but not least, the preparatory meeting took place in Prague in March. It offered a platform for Member States and relevant stakeholders to discuss participation as a crosscutting endeavour for the achievement of the 2030 Agenda.

The meeting showcased approaches to foster participation in various country contexts and sectors, including in education, economic development and good governance. The end goal was to identify positive practices that can be replicated and scaled-up to advance inclusion and participation at all levels.

Overall, the recommendations that emanated from the meeting stressed that beyond fostering sustainable development, equal participation in political and public affairs is also a right, which must be respected and preserved.

Promoting participation and inclusion must therefore be bolstered by substantive, long-term and systematic measures, including laws, policies, institutional capacity and data.

Distinguished delegates,

The focus of today's meeting is no coincidence. In the 2030 Agenda, Member States recognized that fostering inclusive societies based on strong and transparent institutions is an indispensable requirement for sustainable development.

Three years after the adoption of the 2030 Agenda, I am encouraged to see concerted efforts to overcome the problems plaguing the world. Signs of progress can be seen across the board.

However, the current pace of improvement does not yet live to the aspirations of the 2030 Agenda. Globally, more than 190 million people remain unemployed, violence and conflicts damage the fabric of already fragile societies, whereas the growing flight to the cities is putting pressure on ageing infrastructures and natural resources.



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Moreover, the unprecedented passage of four Category 3 or higher hurricanes through the Atlantic in 2017 left devastation in their trail. It showed us once more how destructive climate change is to societies, economies and the environment.

The interconnected nature and the scale of the challenges call for a paradigm shift in our response. The 2030 Agenda has already alerted us to the fact and paved the way forward.

To build and maintain sustainable, resilient and inclusive societies, we need an interdisciplinary whole-of-government and whole-of-society approach.

The spread of information and communications technology and global interconnectedness, in particular, have also great potential to accelerate human progress and bridge the digital and other divides, thus help develop inclusive and people-centred societies.

To advance efforts to this end, today's one-day Special Meeting will seek to explore further collective action in addressing issues of participation and inclusion within the context of the 2030 Agenda.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Inclusion is at the heart of the 2030 Agenda. To realise sustainable development, we must foster the constructive and meaningful participation of all sectors of society. We must enhance social cohesion to identify appropriate context-based solutions. This is why the 2030 Agenda includes a target on participatory decision-making.

We should also carefully select institutions and approaches, and deploy emerging technologies and other instruments that can foster sustainable, resilient and inclusive societies and increase participation in the implementation of the SDGs.

I am confident that the discussions to follow will contribute to this effort through the exchange of various perspectives and insights on how to collectively propel the Agenda's implementation.

I look forward to a fruitful dialogue and insightful proposals during this Special Meeting. Thank you.



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