

Remarks by
Her Excellency Marie Chatardová
President of the Economic and Social Council
ECOSOC Organisational Meeting
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Excellencies,

Distinguished Members of the ECOSOC Bureau,

Distinguished Delegates,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It has been an honour and a privilege for me to preside over this pivotal session of the Economic and Social Council.

It has been an intense year with many new and emerging challenges for the global community. I am convinced that the work of the Council and the recommendations and insights that emerged from the discussions in the rooms of the UN have brought us a step closer to our goal of implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs. I hope that adding the experience and optics of the Czech Republic contributed to our joint efforts.

My profound thanks go to my fellow Bureau Members, Ambassadors Inga Rhonda King of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Marc Pecsteen of Belgium, Mahmamin Mahmaminov of Tajikistan, and Jerry Matthews Matjila of South Africa. Your outstanding contributions and expert stewardship have been instrumental throughout the session. I would also like to thank the representatives of Colombia, which became partner of our presidency.

I would like to congratulate Ambassador King on her election as the President for the 2019 session of the Council, and welcome the new members of the Bureau.

[ECOSOC Special Meeting]

Ladies and gentlemen,

As we move forward to a new cycle and presidency, allow me to reflect on the work we accomplished together during my tenure as President.

In alignment with the ECOSOC theme “From global to local: supporting sustainable and resilient societies in urban and rural communities,” the primary focus of my Presidency was the development of initiatives promoting sustainable, resilient and inclusive societies through participation of all. We successfully presented participation as an inherent tool contributing to the fulfillment of the 2030 Agenda and SDG 16 as a goal of opportunities and inspiration. I hope that with the diverse countries showcasing their success stories and examples of good practices, we succeeded in showing the equal importance of all SDGs.

We often remind ourselves, that no one can be left behind. The presidency of the Czech Republic demonstrated that also none of the SDGs can be left behind.

The 2030 Agenda recognizes that fostering inclusive societies based on strong and transparent institutions is an indispensable requirement for sustainable development. As such, building sustainable and inclusive societies is a crosscutting endeavour, essential to the achievement of all SDGs.

This is why I held an ECOSOC Special Meeting on “Towards sustainable, resilient and inclusive societies through participation of all” to explore further collective action.

The Special Meeting was complemented and informed by a preparatory meeting in Prague, where we brought together not only a wide range of stakeholders, but also high level representatives of the Czech government, member states and the UN system, who introduced their understanding of the 2030 Agenda and its implementation. In New York we organized a series of breakfast meetings with stakeholders from business, academia, municipalities, or nonprofit organizations to explore and highlight the critical role of participation, good governance and strong and inclusive institutions for the achievement of the 2030 Agenda. And we identified pathways to strengthen institutional frameworks for increased participation.

[Integration Segment]

Excellencies,

As we push forward, we must all keep in mind a critical tenet of the 2030 Agenda – its integrated character. Breaking down long-entrenched silos is a daunting task. Shifting long-established behaviors is challenging. Continuing down the same road, however, is not an option.

True to its mandate, the Council held the 2018 Integration Segment under the theme “Innovative communities: leveraging technology and innovation to build sustainable and resilient societies” to analyse pathways to build resilience through integrated policies.

The messages were loud and clear: technology alone cannot provide answers to global challenges, but it can increase our options at hand as well as simplify the deployment of effective solutions to our global challenges. Young people – agents of change and quick adopters of new technologies – must be empowered.

[Joint C.2 ECOSOC Meeting]

The Joint Meeting of the ECOSOC-Second Committee on “The Future of Everything: Sustainable Development in the Age of Rapid Technological Change” last year welcome the first robot to be a panelist at the United Nations. The meeting provided a platform to analyze some of the key trends in technology and innovation in recent years, and their differentiated impacts on people and prosperity.

An important takeaway from the discussions was that the future is here. There is no time to daydream about it. Actions must be taken now to ensure technology is used as a tool to solve development problems, while putting people and the planet first and recognizing the power and dangers of technology.

[Partnership Forum]

The Council continued to engage partners in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. We emphasized the importance of the business community as one of the stakeholders. The 2018 Partnership Forum demonstrated how the inclusion targets in the SDGs could be translated into tangible “business goals” and make positive impacts in the lives of women, youth and vulnerable populations. Long-term engagement of and dialogue among all partners; and effective regulatory frameworks were key to aligning private sector operations with the SDGs. The Forum also demonstrated the potential of big data for public good, while underscoring the need for overtime consistency and sustainability of data for measuring progress.

[Youth Forum]

The Council indeed recognizes the potential and values the contribution of young people to development. As several of our meetings demonstrated introducing young people to participation from an early age, teaches the next generation the importance of involvement and introduces them to their power to change their environment and possibly the world. Since 2012, the annual ECOSOC Youth Forum has become a platform through which young people can contribute to policy discussions through their collective ideas, solutions and innovations. The Youth Forum has indeed established itself as the global platform of choice for young people

It gives me pride to say that the 2018 Youth Forum attracted the largest number of Ministers to date (36 Ministers and Deputy Ministers) and 101 senior officials from Youth Ministries, National Youth Councils or Institutes, 4 Parliamentarians and over 700 youth and civil society representatives.

[ECOSOC Special Meeting on Hurricanes]

Having witnessed the devastating hurricanes in the Caribbean and the United States last year, I also convened a Special Meeting on “Aftermath of recent hurricanes: Achieving a risk-informed and resilient 2030 Agenda”. The meeting demonstrated the disproportionate impact on countries with high-level of exposure and vulnerability to climate change, many of which were Small Island Developing States, and the need to increase their access to concessional

finance given their high-level indebtedness. The meeting also underscored the need to take concerted action to address countries' vulnerability to climate change to ensure no one is left behind.

[Operational activities]

The Council's Operational Activities for Development Segment, at the end of February, also provided a key platform for consideration of the Secretary-General's vision for repositioning the UN development system so that it can deliver on the 2030 Agenda.

Building on the framework of the Quadrennial Comprehensive Policy Review (QCPR), there were common calls for a demand-driven, accountable and responsive UNDS. Fulfilling the 2030 Agenda and realizing inclusive societies requires an empowered and sufficiently-funded resident coordinator system with a flexible and responsive UN country team to provide tailored responses to country contexts. Our discussions were essential in laying the groundwork for the successful negotiations on the General Assembly resolution for repositioning the UN development system adopted at the end of May.

[FfD Forum]

Despite the significant challenges to mobilizing the means of implementation for the SDGs, the level of commitment and ambition remains high, as we saw at the 2018 ECOSOC Forum on Financing for Development Follow-up (FfD Forum). At this year's FfD Forum, we convened a record number of Ministers, senior officials and experts to advance solutions on the seven action areas of the Addis Agenda. In complement to these efforts, the inaugural SDG Investment Fair--held immediately before the Forum--responded to growing interest in opportunities for investing in sustainable development, convening key actors from the public and private sectors. We explored introducing Agenda 2030 as an investment and opportunity to the business community. We highlighted the benefits of cooperation of all stakeholders. During the last year we presented several companies, also from Czech Republic, which are already working towards the fulfillment of the 2030 Agenda, while making profit.

The 2018 Financing for Sustainable Development Report by the Inter-Agency Task Force on Financing for Development provided an analytical foundation for these discussions and the resulting outcome document of the 2018 FfD Forum.

[DCF]

The high-level meeting of the Development Cooperation Forum came to a stark conclusion: development cooperation needs to change more radically and at a vastly accelerated pace, in order to meet the deadline and expectations of the 2030 Agenda, leaving no one behind. Development cooperation has to become more risk-informed, conflict-sensitive and resilience-smart, with stronger links to climate action. Silo and short-term approaches will fail.

The Forum identified areas for the DCF's future work and called for its further strengthening as a platform for inter-regional and multi-stakeholder learning on monitoring, review and impact assessment of development cooperation. This is fundamental to the dynamics of how sustainable development results are achieved and scaled up for greater impact

[FfD and DCF links to HLPF]

As the analytical inputs, recommendations and outcome of the FfD Forum and the Development Cooperation Forum are important elements in support of SDG implementation, we need to ensure that they are better linked to ECOSOC and its forums and segments and also to the HLPF. If successfully channeled to the HLPF, the financing analysis and commitments could help shape a more effective and results-oriented discussion and outcome on SDG progress.

[Humanitarian activities]

The Humanitarian activities segment shared experiences, innovations and best practices from across regions and sectors, including from national and regional authorities, international and local humanitarian organizations, women's groups, people with disabilities, young people, and the private sector.

It focused not only the problems, of which there are many, from protecting civilians caught in conflict situations to providing help from natural disasters, but also on solutions. This year's Humanitarian Affairs Segment was also preceded by ECOSOC's Transition from Relief to Development event. Concrete examples reflected the broader call to overcome silos in all aspects of our work and highlighted the importance of effective join-up between humanitarian and development systems. Today's crises require stronger joint focus on long-term solutions.

[STI]

The Multistakeholder Forum on Science, Technology and Innovation for SDGs, in line with its mandate, promoted networking and matchmaking, including through an exhibition of innovative solutions for the SDGs. The forum deliberated on the challenges and technology solutions with transformative impact on each of the six SDGs that were under the discussion at this year's HLPF. The forum also addressed global trends and cross-cutting issues, including the impact of rapid technological change on the achievement of the SDGs; national STI for SDGs roadmaps for the SDGs and capacity building; local and indigenous knowledge, and home-grown innovations for the achievement of the SDGs; and next steps for the Technology Facilitation Mechanism.

[Coordination and management meeting]

As in previous years, the Coordination and Management Meetings (CMM) of ECOSOC in April, June and July reviewed the reports of the Council's subsidiary bodies; and considered special country situation and regional issues. Through the CMM, the Council also promoted system-wide coordination and review of specific development issues, such as gender mainstreaming and non-communicable diseases.

The ECOSOC Bureau also convened a meeting with the Chairs of the ECOSOC subsidiary bodies in January to advance harmonization, coordination and interlinkages of the work of the Council and the ECOSOC system.

[2018 HLPF]

HLPF showed that the 2030 Agenda has kept its power to inspire and guide actions. The meeting gathered close to 3,000 participants and over 100 ministers. There is a strong momentum to implement the Agenda at all levels. We all agreed that the time for action is now as we are still not on track to realize SDGs by 2030. But we also heard countless encouraging examples of how the Agenda is being translated into concrete policies and measures through the review of SDGs. It seems new ways of making policies are taking root, with many examples of more inclusive, open to participation, and evidence-based approaches.

We heard from record 46 countries present their Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs). They reported significant progress towards adapting their institutions or creating enabling environments for strengthening coordination to achieve the SDGs. They reported great strides in including the goals and targets into national development plans and strategies. The HLPF is becoming a meaningful space for peer learning and for Member States and stakeholders to share their contributions and achievements to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, challenges and lessons learned.

We also had an unprecedented engagement of major groups and other stakeholders, which is very encouraging as governments cannot achieve the 2030 Agenda by themselves. This was witnessed by a large number of side events (240) and special events on partnerships, education, business, SDG Learning and Training, local and regional governments and chief sustainability officers. We had a film festival and a number of exhibitions that enriched the official meetings.

I am sure when next year HLPF also meets under the auspices of the General Assembly, it will reaffirm the political will at the highest level to continue implementing the 2030 Agenda and lifting the obstacles. I hope our heads of state and government will come with a number of commitments that will spearhead the implementation.

[HLS of ECOSOC]

The ECOSOC High-level Segment represented the culmination of the ECOSOC cycle on the 2018 ECOSOC theme, *"From global to local: supporting sustainable and resilient societies in urban and rural communities"* as the ECOSOC segments and forums, and the ECOSOC functional

commissions and expert bodies, have worked to provide integrated policy options and recommendations, address gaps, and contribute to the overall review of initial progress in implementation. The cycle offered policy recommendations to accelerate efforts towards sustainable and resilient societies and sustainable development.

The High-level Segment brought together the many different strands of that work. The Segment also looked into visions and projections for the future of the SDGs and the role of new and emerging technologies in realizing them.

During the High Level Dialogue, the four presidencies of ECOSOC, General Assembly, Human Rights Council and Security Council discussed the importance of an integrated and coherent approach among relevant political, security and development actors, within and outside the United Nations, highlighting the cross-pillar potential of the Czech Republic's ECOSOC Presidency priority, "Towards sustainable, resilient and inclusive societies through participation of all".

[Closing]

Dear colleagues,

The 2018 ECOSOC session has come to its conclusion, but I am heartened to know that it was a productive and successful session during which the Council touched upon critical topics and helped deepen conversations on how to best address them.

In closing, let me thank you all again for your collaboration and support during this past year and wish our new President, the incoming Bureau and the Council every success in the coming year.

I am confident that Ambassador King will carry the torch and bring the Council a step even closer to our common goal – realizing a sustainable future for all.

Thank you.