



**GETTING TO KNOW THE ECOSOC SYSTEM
IN THE SDG ERA**

Briefing by H.E. Inga Rhonda King

President of the Economic and Social Council

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Welcoming Remarks

It is my honour to welcome you to this briefing on “Getting to know the ECOSOC system in the SDG era”. Together with my fellow Vice-Presidents, I would like to extend a warm welcome in particular to our new members to the Council. You are joining us at an exciting time for ECOSOC. I would also like to welcome non ECOSOC members joining us today, the ECOSOC family maintains an open-door policy and everyone is always welcome in our house.

I would like to share with you my vision for the Council generally and for this year in particular and underscore our responsibility, as ECOSOC members, in making ECOSOC fulfill its potential. I will also provide a preview of our work programme for the coming months, which will be followed by an interactive segment to hear your views.

I am pleased that we are joined by Ambassador Lazarous Kapambwe, who presided over the Council in 2011. Ambassador Kapambwe will share with us his reflections on how ECOSOC adapted to change over the years.

Our briefing will be followed by a UNITAR orientation course on ECOSOC for new ECOSOC members. I encourage all of you to participate in this orientation, which will delve deeper into the workings of the Council, its various segments and forums, as well as the HLPF.

Excellencies,

Distinguished Delegates,

We are facing a world that is becoming increasingly more complex and these complexities will continue to grow with accelerated pace of technological change and globalization. The Economic and Social Council will need to continually adapt itself to provide the kind of policy analysis, policy review and policy guidance to Member States suitable for 21st century problems. I am pleased to share with you our new brochure “ECOSOC At a Glance”. This brochure provides a glimpse of the vast body of work of the Council and the ECOSOC system as well as the recent major mandates and pertinent information for our work in 2019. I hope you will be inspired by its contents because it does show that ECOSOC has been given powerful mandates that could be used to fulfill its central mandate to provide solutions to international social, economic, health and related problems and to promote economic and social progress and higher standards of living.

Excellencies,

When I assumed the Presidency of the Council last July, I committed to delivering on the most successful High-level Political Forum (HLPF) to date and to reviving the role and authority of the Economic and Social Council, building on the guidance provided by the General Assembly in its resolution 72/305 on “Review of the implementation of GA resolution 68/1 on the strengthening of the ECOSOC”.

The expectations are high this year—a critical year for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The High-level Political Forum will be convened twice— in July under the auspices of ECOSOC and in September at the summit level under the auspices of the General Assembly. Having the most successful HLPF this July is crucial for our success at the HLPF Summit in September.

The July HLPF will follow up on progress towards the six goals under review, namely SDG 4 (education), SDG 8 (Growth and employment, SDG 10 (inequality), SDG 13 (climate change), SDG 16 (peaceful societies and robust institutions) and SDG 17 (Means of Implementation). The HLPF Summit, at the Heads of State and Government level in September, will review overall progress on the 2030 Agenda and all 17 SDGs. The HLPF Summit will identify progress and persisting and emerging challenges, provide political guidance on implementation, and mobilize further action to accelerate implementation. Its declaration is mandated to also reflect the work of the July HLPF.

Improving ECOSOC's contribution to sustainable development, SDGs progress and to the HLPF is, therefore, more important than ever. We

must work together to harness the rich work of our subsidiary bodies, as well as the various ECOSOC segments and forums.

To date, 111 voluntary national reviews have been conducted at the HLPF from 102 countries, convened under ECOSOC where we also have very interactive reviews of specific SDGs. We must sustain this momentum around the HLPF as we do need a robust follow-up and review of the 2030 Agenda to ensure its implementation is on track. And we must commit to accelerating action in implementing the SDGs at the HLPF Summit.

We must keep in mind that other high-level meetings of key relevance to our work will also be taking place in September this year, namely the Secretary-General's Climate Summit, the High-level Dialogue on financing for development, the High-level meeting on universal health coverage and the High-level mid-term review of SAMOA Pathway.

Excellencies,

This year, we are expected to deliver a strengthened **Operational Activities Segment**, an improved and more impactful **Integration**

Segment, and a **High-level Segment** focused on future trends and scenarios, and their impact on the SDGs.

On 11 January, I convened a **Presidential Retreat** on renewing the role and authority of ECOSOC in the SDG Era. In the coming days, I will be sharing with you a summary to highlight the proposals emanating from the retreat to make the HLPF more engaging, enhance the Council's guidance to its subsidiary bodies and the UN development system, and break down the silos among the UN's development, peace, human rights and humanitarian areas of work.

I am also committed to strengthening the role of the Council in guiding the work of our subsidiary bodies to enhance their contribution to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and its deliberative function, with the vision provided by the General Assembly in its resolution 72/305.

Excellencies,

The subsidiary bodies of ECOSOC, such as the functional commissions and expert bodies, constitute the technical arm of the intergovernmental machinery. They provide policy options, carry out the detailed analysis of economic and social issues needed to inject substance into the policy guidance and proceedings of the Council and suggest indicators and benchmarks.

And the Economic and Social Council has the main responsibility to coordinate and provide guidance to the ECOSOC system. It also impacts a diverse family of UN entities working on development.

This year is an opportune moment for us to demonstrate the potential of the Council. Just last month I met a young lady, Victoria Ibiwoye, a youth advocate from Nigeria and facilitator of global citizenship education, while we were both attending the UNESCO Global Education Meeting in Brussels. Here is what Victoria subsequently wrote to me to say:

I quote ...

“In a world lost in chaos, UN ECOSOC is an oasis of hope and a portal of solutions that will make the world a better place. It’s unarguably [the] UN’s center for innovative solutions.”

End of quote

Our agenda is ambitious as required by the scale of 2030 Agenda and the challenges we face. I believe that together we can strengthen the Council and harness the energy and enthusiasm of the HLPF to promote sustainable development. I hope this briefing will help guide us in that direction. And, more so, I hope we can live up to Victoria’s vision and understanding of the role of ECOSOC.

Before I give a Preview of the 2019 ECOSOC Programme of Work allow me to invite our dear colleague, the distinguished Permanent Representative of Zambia to the United Nations, H. E. Ambassador Lazarous Kapambwe, who is also one of the Co Facilitators of the 2019 Financing for Development Outcome Document and the 2011 President of the ECOSOC to share with us his reflections on how ECOSOC adapted to change over the years.

Ambassador, the floor is now yours.

