



Statement
Inaugural ECOSOC Presidential Lecture
H.E. Ms. Inga Rhonda King
President of the Economic and Social Council
20 May 2019

H. E. Maria Fernanda Espinosa Garcés, 73rd President of General Assembly,
Excellencies,
Distinguished delegates,
Ladies and gentlemen,

I am delighted to welcome you to this inaugural Presidential Lecture on “Reason, Science, Humanism and Progress in Creating the Future We Want”. I extend a warm welcome to our distinguished guest lecturer, Professor Steven Pinker.

Since its inception, the United Nations has been determined to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war.

Today, the United Nations continues to play a key role in promoting sustainable development, peace and human rights in its quest to create a better world for all through global dialogue and collaboration which have resulted in landmark international agreements. And four years ago, we adopted the most ambitious and universal plan of action for eliminating extreme poverty, fostering peaceful, just and inclusive societies, and protecting the planet.

The adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its 17 Sustainable Development Goals was a triumph for multilateralism. We accomplished this

through an inclusive and transparent process, that engaged Governments and non-governmental actors from all around the world.

As 2030 draws near, with just over 10 years remaining, it is time to take bold and transformative actions to accelerate the implementation of our commitments for a sustainable future. Today's Presidential Lecture aims to inspire our deliberations to that end.

Dear colleagues,

We live in a world that is becoming increasingly complex. These complexities will continue to grow with the accelerated pace of technological change and globalization. We need a forward-looking Economic and Social Council that continually adapts itself to provide the kind of policy analysis, review and guidance suitable for today's challenges. Realizing the future we want will depend on our policy choices today, informed also by the long arc of history. Our discussions, therefore, need to stimulate thinking on how long-term and future trends can influence the realization of the SDGs. The Presidential Lecture Series will bring thought leaders to help us unpack these trends and shape the future we want.

We are fortunate to have as our first guest for the Presidential Lecture Series, Professor Steven Pinker. Professor Pinker is a renowned psychologist, Harvard Professor and best-selling author. He is considered by Foreign Policy to be among the "World's Top 100 Public Intellectuals" and Time's "100 most Influential People in the World Today". He is a Johnstone Family Professor in the Department of Psychology at Harvard University. He conducts research on language and cognition, writes for publications such as the New York Times and Time, and is the author of ten books, including *The Language Instinct*, *How the Mind Works*, *The Blank Slate*, *The Stuff of Thought*, *The Better Angels of Our Nature*, and *The Sense of Style*.

His most recent book "Enlightenment Now: The Case for Reason, Science, Humanism, and Progress" and his lecture, entitled: "Is the world getting better or worse? A look at the numbers" at TED, generated discussion on issues pertinent to our work at the United Nations.

I am also pleased to welcome Her Excellency H. Elizabeth Thompson, Permanent Representative of Barbados to the United Nations, who will engage with Professor Pinker in a conversation following his lecture, after which the floor will be opened for an interactive dialogue which will also be moderated by Ambassador Thompson.