



# ECOSOC

United Nations Economic and Social Council

**TAKING ACTION TO IMPROVE LIVES**

**Briefing of the President of ECOSOC, Ambassador Mona Juul,  
on the 2020 HLPF and the High-Level Segment of ECOSOC  
Friday, 12 June 2020**

Excellencies,  
Colleagues,  
Dear friends,

Thank you for attending this briefing. I hope you and your families are all well in these challenging times.

First of all, I would like to thank all participants for your commitment to ECOSOC and your active engagement in our virtual meetings these past months. I would also like to thank the chairs of the Humanitarian Segment and the Operational Activities Segment, Ambassador Hilale and Ambassador Sandoval and their teams for organizing truly substantive and timely meetings. My appreciation also goes to Ambassador Akram and Ambassador Margaryan and their teams for their important work on the Management and Integration Segments, respectively.

Today, I wanted to brief you about the latest arrangements for the United Nations high-level political forum on sustainable development (HLPF) under the auspices of ECOSOC and the High-Level Segment of ECOSOC. Due to COVID-19, we have to make a

few exceptional arrangements for this year's HLPF. The adapted programme was shared on ECOSOC Place on 9 June.

The HLPF and ECOSOC high-level segment will take place from 7 to 17 July 2020, as planned. This includes a ministerial segment from 14 to 16 July.

The theme for this year is “Accelerated action and transformative pathways: realizing the decade of action and delivery for sustainable development”.

The decade of action and delivery to step up progress towards the SDGs and realize their targets by 2030 is now taking off in an entirely different context than what we expected. With the dramatic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.

This makes this year's HLPF especially important. The HLPF is the central UN platform to review SDGs implementation and the impact of the pandemic on the 2030 Agenda. We should discuss how to build back better, greener and fairer. We must get back on track.

The HLPF will be a moment to demonstrate our commitment to a multilateral response, international cooperation and solidarity. The Ministerial Declaration will give political guidance. Let us be innovative and ambitious!

The HLPF is also an opportunity to announce new SDG acceleration actions or initiatives that your government is undertaking in line with the decade of action. You are invited to showcase these using the dedicated online platform.

Let me now give you more information of the meetings themselves.

COVID-19 has imposed major limitations on in-person meetings and international travel. The UN Medical Director has indicated that we should avoid holding in person meetings during the month of July. The 2020 HLPF and the High-Level Segment of ECOSOC will therefore meet entirely virtually. The same will apply to the Integration Segment the day before.

Let me start by saying a few words about the Integration Segment, which is closely linked to the HLPF. I will then talk about the programme of the HLPF and related events.

[Integration segment]

The Integration Segment will be chaired by His Excellency Mher Margaryan, Vice-President of ECOSOC (Armenia). Due to the impacts of COVID-19, it will take place for half a day only, from 9 a.m. to 12 noon on 6 July.

The Integration Segment will bring together the key messages from the subsidiary bodies of the Council and the UN system on the 2020 theme of ECOSOC and HLPF. The segment is mandated in particular to support the HLPF thematic reviews.

Key messages from the Integration Segment will be presented at the HLPF.

Information about this segment is available on the ECOSOC website.

Let me move to the HLPF and ECOSOC high-level segment overall.

[HLPF and HLS Programme and Format]

In consultation with the ECOSOC Bureau, I have made adjustments to the format and programme of the 2020 HLPF and high-level segment of ECOSOC. The purpose was two-fold:

(i) to adjust the focus of the various sessions to address the impact of COVID-19. This led us to amend some of the sessions' titles and annotations compared to what you had seen earlier and

(ii) to adapt the meeting to the fact that it would be held virtually. We adjusted the meeting hours to accommodate different time zones. We will thus start at 9 AM, New York time.

The revised programme of the meeting is available on the HLPF 2020 website. An annotated agenda will be shared shortly.

I would like us to use this virtual format as an advantage. I have invited VNR countries to ensure a minister or similar high-level representative presents their review. I encourage you all to actively involve your capitals in the HLPF. We have an opportunity to present countries' realities as never before.

The recent operational and humanitarian activities segments of ECOSOC have shown that it is possible for virtual meetings to be inspiring, interactive and focused. I am sure this will be the case for the HLPF and related meetings.

The adapted programme reflects this year's special circumstance. It is not setting a precedent for future forums.

[Thematic Sessions]

From Tuesday, 7 July to Friday, 10 July, the HLPF will hold sessions around the theme of the forum. The aim is to keep the focus on the decade of action for sustainable development, while examining the impacts of COVID-19 and reflecting on the way forward. Please be informed that this year's SDG Progress report is posted online.

There will be six thematic discussions covering the SDGs.

There will be discussions on SIDS and on African countries, LDCs, and LLDCs.

We will have a session on leaving no one behind. And we will discuss means of implementation: financing for development and science, technology and innovation.

We will engage with major groups and other stakeholder, including in a dedicated session.

We will hear messages from the regions. There will also be an address of the President of the UN Environment Assembly.

Several thematic sessions of the HLPF are currently being prepared through virtual expert meetings and consultations. The key findings and recommendations will be reflected in a two-page secretariat background note for each session, which will be posted at HLPF website. There will also be a somewhat longer analytical document.

[Voluntary National Reviews]

From Friday, 10 July to Thursday, 16 July 2020, the HLPF will hear 47 voluntary national reviews (VNRs). It is heartening that so many countries decided to carry out their VNR despite the impact of COVID-19. When adapting the HLPF programme, we have ringfenced the VNRs. They are an essential part of Agenda 2030 follow-up.

As in the past, countries presenting their first VNRs will have 15 minutes for their presentation, followed by a 15 minute interaction with participants. Second timers will have a 10

minute presentation and a 10 minute dialogue. We have allotted a bit of extra time in case there are technical glitches.

The sessions on VNRs will include a combination of live presentations and discussions, and pre-recorded video presentations. In the case of pre-recorded video presentations, Member States and other participants will be invited to share written questions in advance, which will be answered during the video or in written form.

The schedule of presentations of the VNR countries is included in the latest programme.

In order to prepare for the interaction on the VNRs, it would be important for delegations to examine the main messages from the countries presenting VNRs. They are already available on HLPF website. The full reports of the VNRs are becoming available as we speak.

I encourage your country to join the “Group of friends of VNRs” chaired by Ambassador Juan Sandoval-Mendiola, Deputy Permanent Representative of Mexico. The “friends” aim to support VNR countries in preparing their presentation and interaction at the HLPF. Of course, also countries who are not members of the “Group of Friends” will be able to ask questions during the dialogue on each VNR, time permitting. Major Groups and other stakeholders will be able to ask questions as usual.

The VNRs aim at supporting peer learning and the launch of partnerships and support. It is important to use the VNR sessions for that purpose.

VNR countries might have more specific questions to about these sessions. They will be able to ask them during the Third Global VNR Workshop that will be held in the form of webinar next week. I thank my colleague and Vice- President of ECOSOC, Ambassador Sandoval for agreeing to participate in this webinar.

[High-Level Segment of ECOSOC]

The last day of the High-level Segment on Friday, 17 July will include a high-level discussion on “multilateralism after COVID-19: what kind of UN do we need at the 75th anniversary”. The session will reflect on the kind of UN needed to deliver a forward looking and effective collective response to global crises such as COVID-19 and long-term challenges such as climate change. It will also consider ECOSOC’s role in reinvigorating multilateralism and of

course the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. This discussion responds to the General Assembly mandate that all UN events this year reflect on the UN 75th Anniversary.

Another session will be dedicated to trends and scenarios related to the theme of ECOSOC and on the long-term impact of current trends on the SDGs. Again, this will be discussed in the context of the COVID-19 crisis. This session responds to the mandate of the high-level segment contained in General Assembly resolution 72/305. The Secretary-General's reports on the theme and long trends and scenarios are available on the 2020 HLPF website.

[General Debate]

Let me also inform you that this year the general debate will be conducted through written or video interventions from your Ministers and other representatives. These statements will be posted on the HLPF website and in e-deleGATE.

[Informal events around the HLPF]

All events around the HLPF, including the special events, DESA's VNR Labs, side events and exhibitions will be virtual. More details about all events are available on the 2020 HLPF website.

A virtual SDG Media Zone will be held during the Ministerial Segment. It will offer for pre-recorded interviews and other content to listeners around the world reflecting on the discussion in the HLPF.

[Civil Society Participation]

Major groups and other stakeholders play a crucial role in the HLPF. They are also key in the implementation, follow up and review of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs. They are invited to participate in this year's HLPF under the same provisions as in previous forums, bearing in mind the special procedures linked to virtual meetings. I am happy to say that I will be chairing the session that they are organizing to present their perspective on the implementation of the SDGs and impact of COVID-19.

The discussion paper on the theme of the HLPF submitted by major groups and other stakeholders is available at the HLPF website.

Representatives of the Major Groups and other Stakeholders as well as ECOSOC NGOs are also present today in this briefing.

[Ministerial Declaration]

Before I close, let me say that I am pleased to see that the consultations on the HLPF/ECOSOC Ministerial Declaration are proceeding well on the basis of the zero draft. I thank the co-facilitators, Ambassador Georgi Velikov Panayotov, Permanent Representative of Bulgaria, and Ambassador Amal Mudallali, Permanent Representative of Lebanon for their excellent work.

[Conclusion]

I thank you all for your continued support and engagement in the HLPF. I will share a letter with you after this briefing where I will outline the key points from the briefing.

I believe that, in the spirit of unity, solidarity and multilateral cooperation, we will have a successful 2020 HLPF. It will be a strong start of the decade of action and delivery for the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs while combating the pandemic. I look forward to a powerful and unique HLPF.

Thank you.