



# ECOSOC

United Nations Economic and Social Council

**TAKING ACTION TO IMPROVE LIVES**

General Assembly Plenary:  
Report of the Economic and Social Council

November 5, 2020

Introduction of the report by,  
Ambassador Mona Juul, Permanent Representative of Norway and  
President of ECOSOC for the 2019-2020 cycle

---

President,  
Excellencies,  
Dear Colleagues,

It is my pleasure to introduce to you the Report of the Economic and Social Council from its 2019-2020 session.

As the report shows, in the midst of the pandemic ECOSOC was able to act swiftly to reorganise its work, and that of its subsidiary bodies. We readjusted our focus to assess, and respond, to the: economic, social, and environmental impacts of COVID-19 and although we had to modify our plans, we were always moving ahead and getting the work done for people and planet.

I thank all Member States for the patience and support shown to the Bureau, and myself during this time and wish to thank the UN Secretariat and staff the world over, for their hard work in an extremely challenging working environment. Together we showed the world that the work of ECOSOC- and the UN- does not stop, even when it seems that everything else is being brought to a halt.

Excellencies,  
Owing to the impact of COVID-19, many of ECOSOC's forums and events were scaled down or modified, but we did manage to forge ahead with a large proportion of our work.

(Please check against delivery)

This included the **Financing for Development Forum** in April. We quickly adapted our modalities and used innovative ways to conduct our negotiations and meetings virtually. The forum held two meetings to address the immediate needs, and the longer-term impacts of the pandemic. Which convened the UN system, and other international bodies that collectively offer over 1.2 trillion dollars for countries most in need. These meetings helped Member States to gain a better understanding of the concrete policy, and financing, options available to tackle the global crisis, and build back better. The FfD Forum resulted in the first agreed policy guidance on financing COVID-19 response and recovery.

Also as a part of the FfD agenda, I was proud to work together with the President of the 74<sup>th</sup> Session of the General Assembly to create together the **High-Level Panel on International Financial Accountability, Transparency and Integrity for Achieving the 2030 Agenda** (FACTI Panel), whose report is due in February 2021. We expect it will inform continuing discussions on financing for development, and will help guide the United Nations and its Member States towards a future with more: transparent and accountable financial, and economic systems, that truly serve our aims of sustainable development.

Excellencies,

In May, the **Operational Activities for Development Segment** delivered on its mandate as the prime oversight and accountability platform of the UN development system's support to the 2030 Agenda. The Segment reviewed four years of progress in implementing the guidance provided by General Assembly on the **Quadrennial Comprehensive Policy Review** of operational activities of the United Nations system, or- the QCPR. Along with the progress in implementing the repositioning of the UN development system. The Segment paved the way for negotiations on the new General Assembly resolution on the QCPR that will guide the system for the next four years. It also discussed the critical response to COVID-19 at the country level; the funding of operational activities for development; progress on transparency and accountability; the revamped Resident Coordinator system; the new generation of UN Country Teams; and the Secretary-General's recommendations on the regional review, and the multi-country office review.

Following the Segment, ECOSOC adopted a Resolution on the implementation of the QCPR, which welcomes the progress achieved by the United Nations development system, and notes the challenges remaining. It also provides a mandate to the Secretary-General to take forward the multi-country office review, and the repositioning of the regional assets of the United Nations development system.

Excellencies,

During the **Humanitarian Affairs Segment**, the international community came together virtually to address pressing issues and innovations for strengthening humanitarian action, especially in the face of responding to COVID-19.

The Chair of the Segment launched a Call to Action in support of humanitarian response in fighting the COVID-19 pandemic, which was joined by 173 delegations, along with the African Union, and the European Union. In a series of high-level panels, humanitarian partners highlighted key areas for further action. Including on the complexity of health challenges in humanitarian contexts, and the early, fair and equitable access to vaccines and therapeutics. The Segment further focused on the role of new technology and innovation in improving humanitarian effectiveness. Along with the challenge of protracted internal displacement. With a focus on mobilizing action on longer-term solutions for the over 50 million internally displaced persons globally.

The Segment also held a high-level event on combatting and preventing sexual and gender-based violence in humanitarian crises, which considered the heightened protection challenges posed by the pandemic. While emphasising the essential role of women in the fight against COVID-19 and the importance of their inclusion in decision-making and in building responses.

Excellencies,

The **Integration Segment** also convened virtually and discussed analysis and policy proposals from ECOSOC subsidiary bodies, and the UN system, on the 2020 theme of ECOSOC and HLPF. The discussions confirmed that silo thinking, and approaches, continue to hinder progress, not only in the implementation of the SDGs but also COVID-19 responses.

Excellencies,

The **High-Level Political Forum on sustainable development** under the auspices of ECOSOC convened in July in a virtual format, and included a three-day ministerial segment. The Forum brought Heads of State and Government, and ministerial level officials, together with senior representatives of the UN system and other international bodies and stakeholders. It was particularly welcome that forty-seven countries also proceeded with presenting their voluntary national reviews, despite the challenges created by COVID-19.

The deliberations of the HLPF focused on delivering the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs during this Decade of Action and Delivery in the new context of the COVID19 pandemic. Governments engaged in discussions with renowned experts and stakeholders on how the international community can demonstrate solidarity and international cooperation in responding to the pandemic and how to adopt responses that put us back on track to achieve the SDGs, and accelerate progress during the

decade of action. The meeting produced key messages and concrete guidance for policymakers and practitioners. Participants emphasised that the world was already not on track to deliver the Goals before the pandemic and, now years of progress are being reversed and the road ahead is steeper, but, also gave the firm message that the 2030 Agenda is our roadmap for recovering from COVID-19, and that the pandemic offers the opportunity to introduce transformative changes that we need to realise the 2030 Agenda.

We discussed also the importance of solidarity and foresight on financing, and increasing investment in, public services including: social protection, health systems, education, water, sanitation, digital connectivity, and pursuing a recovery that builds a more inclusive, gender-responsive, and environmentally sound economy.

During its **High-level Segment, ECOSOC** convened a discussion on “Multilateralism after COVID 19” as a contribution to the UN75 commemorations. It issued a firm commitment to multilateralism. With countries, and stakeholders, from all regions strongly reaffirming the need to invest in inclusive multilateralism with the United Nations- including a revitalised ECOSOC- at its core.

Excellencies,

During the 2019-2020 ECOSOC cycle, I was also proud to continue to reinforce and build on the **cooperation of ECOSOC with other UN bodies**. A process instigated by my predecessor Ambassador Rhonda King of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines.

I worked closely with the President of the General Assembly of the 74<sup>th</sup> session, particularly in ensuring a joined-up approach to the work of the GA and ECOSOC during the disruptions created by the pandemic.

ECOSOC also held joint meetings with the Second Committee and the Peacebuilding Commission and I was proud to brief both the Security Council and the Human Rights Council on complementary areas of ECOSOCs work. I look forward to this strong cooperation across the UN system continuing during this ECOSOC cycle and beyond.

Excellencies,

The Council also continued to play a facilitating role for civil society, including by granting consultative status to 274 **non-governmental organizations**.

It is noteworthy also that 189 NGOs in consultative status presented written statements to the Council's High-level segment in July- a record number. This testifies to the determination of civil society to continue to contribute to the Council's work despite the obstacles to in-person participation presented by the pandemic. As the restrictions

on participation persist, we must continue to find creative ways to include their much needed voices in our work.

I also would like to acknowledge the contributions of the science and technology communities on the SDGs and COVID-19 responses. In particular the work of the Technology Facilitation Mechanism, the Secretary-General's 10-member group, and the UN Inter-Agency Task Team.

Dear colleagues,

With the support of the ECOSOC Bureau and the ECOSOC membership, the Council continued its important work despite all the challenges during its 2020 session. Fulfilling our core mission to bring people, and issues together, to promote collective action for a sustainable world. ECOSOC has put on full display, in these challenging times, its unique strength as an inclusive platform to engage and mobilise: governments, local authorities, the UN system, international finance institutions, the scientific community, civil society and young people around the world and I am proud of our achievements towards the priority areas I set out one year ago. Including on advancing Financing for Development, making the ECOSOC ecosystem as relevant and efficient as possible, ensuring ECOSOC is playing its part in the implementation of UN reform and bringing a gender perspective to all aspects of our work.

Despite the added obstacles that lie ahead, it is clear that the Economic and Social Council is needed more than ever. To continue to promote an inclusive multilateralism, with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development as our guiding pathway to a sustainable future for all.

Thank you.