



ECOSOC

United Nations Economic and Social Council

TAKING ACTION TO IMPROVE LIVES

STATEMENT ON COVID-19 by the President of the Economic and Social Council H. E. Ambassador Mona Juul 18 March 2020

We are currently confronted with a unique crisis with widespread human, social, and economic ramifications. The coronavirus pandemic (COVID-19) is truly a test of all of our countries and societies and I offer my condolences to the families and countries who have already suffered the loss or illness of their dear ones.

As we embark on the Decade of Action and Delivery for the Sustainable Development Goals, we face additional unprecedented challenges presented by this unpredictable and volatile situation. One that jeopardises economic and social development for us all. Not least countries in special situations and vulnerable groups who feel the effects acutely.

It is evident that the UN must take a coherent approach across bodies and mandates. One based not only on accurate information and assessment of risks, but also on solidarity among Member States. I am confident that ECOSOC is well placed and prepared to play its due role in these efforts.

As President of ECOSOC, I have a responsibility to ensure the continued work of the entire ECOSOC ecosystem. Not only here at headquarters in New York, but even more importantly on the ground, through the critical work of ECOSOC subsidiary organs and their experts. We must always ensure that the health and safety of people is our first priority. Be it delegates, staff of the United Nations - both local and international - or the partners of the UN who continue to perform essential duties all over the world.

Together with the President of the General Assembly, the Bureau of ECOSOC and I have taken the unfortunate but necessary decision to postpone the UN75 Youth Plenary and ECOSOC Youth Forum ([see letter of 10 March](#)). The Bureau of ECOSOC has proposed major downscaling and cancellations of several substantial ECOSOC meetings ([see letter of 11 March](#)). We had also taken the decision to postpone all regular ECOSOC meetings in New York until the end of March. In light of updated advice, the Bureau will propose to further postpone or cancel all ECOSOC meetings in the coming 8 weeks.

Given the rapidly evolving situation, it is clear that we need to remain flexible regarding the planned meetings of ECOSOC and its subsidiary bodies ([see my letter of 16 March](#)). We will continue to update the schedule of ECOSOC as the situation evolves, working in close cooperation with Member States.

I believe we all share the overarching priority of putting health and safety first, while also ensuring accelerated action to implement the SDGs throughout this crisis. We have heard clearly from Member States the acknowledgment of the need for continued agility and flexibility. We are exploring and consulting with other UN bodies and legal and IT specialists within the UN Secretariat on virtual options and solutions. I will continue to keep you informed, and will revert with further information and proposals as the situation progresses.

A challenge of global proportions requires a global response. The growing scale of this issue, and the sheer number of individuals affected underscores that we need to show true solidarity in all our efforts to address COVID-19.