



# ECOSOC

United Nations Economic and Social Council

TAKING ACTION TO IMPROVE LIVES

**Statement by H.E. Ambassador Munir Akram,  
President of the Economic and Social Council**

**Briefing to the UN Human Rights Council on the  
UN High-level Political Forum for Sustainable  
Development and the 2030 Agenda**

(22 September 2020)

**Madame President,  
Excellencies,  
Distinguished Delegates,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

I am honored to address the Human Rights Council in my capacity as President of the ECOSOC.

2- I welcome the opportunity offered by HRC Resolution 37/25 to engage in a constructive

dialogue with the Human Rights Council. Strengthening such links between the HRC and ECOSOC are critical to implementing 2030 Agenda in an integrated and holistic manner.

3- The work of Economic and the Human Rights Council are integrated by the UN Charter's call for international cooperation to promote "*better standards of life in larger freedom*" and by the International Convention on the Economic Social and Cultural Rights.

**Madam President,**

4- The Covid-19 Pandemic has crystallized the interface between poverty and human rights. The virus does not discriminate, but its impacts are felt more harshly by those who suffer the consequences of systematic discrimination and inequality.

5- As the Secretary-General stated on 18 July, in his Nelson Mandela lecture: “Inequality defines our times.” The legacy of colonialism and racism is a major systemic cause of inequality today.

6- In the COVID crisis we have seen some shameful demonstrations of discrimination against and victimization of the poor, the vulnerable and minorities.

7- In order to build these inter-linkages, I plan to convene a special meeting of ECOSOC in 2021 to commemorate the 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Durban Conference against Racism and Inequality.

8- I hope that the Human Rights Council would also provide its suggestions when it considers the item on Durban Declaration during the ongoing session.

## **Madame President,**

9- As we embark on the Decade of Action to implement the SDGs, the Human Rights Council can complement the work of ECOSOC and HLPF.

10- The 2020 HLPF met from 7 to 16 July under the auspices of ECOSOC. The Forum was held in an entirely virtual format due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

11- The Theme of the Session was *“Accelerated action and transformative pathways: realizing the decade of action and delivery for sustainable development”*.

12- Notwithstanding the lack of agreement on a Ministerial Declaration, in the HLPF discussions, member states:

- expressed their firm commitment to a multilateral response to COVID-19;
- stressed that vulnerable countries must not be left behind in the recovery;
- adequate financing, debt relief and debt waiver should be provided, particularly for low and middle income countries;
- once developed, a “vaccine” against COVID should be available to everyone and everywhere – rich or poor at affordable prices;
- in order to meet the scale and ambition of the 2030 Agenda, and speedy recovery from the Covid-19 pandemic, the means of implementation of the SDGs must be strengthened, particularly in the areas of financing, sustainable infrastructure

investment, international trade, science and technology, capacity building and partnerships;

- The 2020 HLPF also reiterated the need to recognize the human rights and dignity of all peoples; promote social justice; combat discrimination, prejudice, xenophobia, and tackle inequality in all its dimensions.

**Madam President,**

13- Urgent debt relief and adequate finance is essential to enable developing countries to respond to the COVID crisis. I welcome the recent report of the International Expert on the effects of foreign debt on the full enjoyment of all human rights, Ms. Yuefen Li. She has proposed several practical solutions to address the debt challenge from a human rights perspective. I hope that the Human

Rights Council will take further action on the recommendations contained in her report.

**Madam President,**

14- Human rights are an intrinsic part of sustainable development, and sustainable development is a powerful vehicle for the realization of all human rights.

15- While the discussions on the “*right to development*” have long been framed within the paradigm of the North-South divide, the ongoing pandemic and global economic recession has once again reaffirmed that the right to development must be protected as a global right.

16- The adoption of the SDGs has provided concrete content to the right of development. This could ease the task of translating the right to development into

legally binding obligations. The SDGs should form the blueprint for our rebuilding efforts.

17- Tangible progress on this issue at the Human Rights Council would complement the work of ECOSOC in implementing 2030 agenda.

**Madam President,**

18- Together, we – ECOSOC and the Human Rights Council – must strive to ensure that economic, social and cultural rights are respected and the 2030 Agenda is implemented.

**I thank you.**

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