



THE PRESIDENT
OF THE
GENERAL ASSEMBLY



The President
of the
Economic and Social Council

21 February 2019

Excellency

We have the honour to transmit herewith a summary of the inaugural Joint Briefing of the Presidents of the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) convened on Thursday, 31 January 2019 in the Trusteeship Council Chamber at 10:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m. The Joint Briefing was convened to provide updates and hear the views of Member States on i) the alignment process; (ii) High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development; (iii) Youth; (iv) Decent Work; and (v) Financing for Development.

Please accept, Excellency, the assurances of our highest consideration.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "M. ESPINOSA".

H.E. María Fernanda Espinosa Garcés

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "I. Rhonda King".

H.E. Inga Rhonda King

All Permanent Representatives and
Permanent Observers to the United Nations
New York

**Summary of Joint Briefing of the Presidents of the
General Assembly and ECOSOC
31 January 2019
Trusteeship Council Chamber, United Nations Headquarters**

The President of the General Assembly, H.E. Ms. María Fernanda Espinosa Garcés, and President of the Economic and Social Council, H.E. Ms. Inga Rhonda King, convened the first Joint Briefing of the Presidents in the history of the United Nations. The briefing was organized to apprise Members States of the efforts to facilitate coherence in the work of the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council, pursuant to Assembly resolution 72/313 of 20 September 2018, entitled “*Revitalization of the work of the General Assembly*”, in particular paragraphs 29, 30 and 31 related to the need to enhance synergies and coherence and reduce overlap where it is found to exist in the agendas of the General Assembly, the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) and their subsidiary bodies, as well as the High-Level Political Forum and other related forums in light of the adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

The objective of this on-going work of the General Assembly on the alignment of agendas of the General Assembly, ECOSOC, and their subsidiary bodies and the HLPF and other related forums in light of the adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is to ensure adequate strategic direction and guidance on sustainable development at the global level.

Opening

In her opening remarks, *Her Excellency Ms. María Fernanda Espinosa Garcés, President of the General Assembly*, outlined efforts and initiatives underway to ensure efficiency on issues of mutual concern between the General Assembly and ECOSOC. She emphasized that the two organs must play a mutually reinforcing role, with the ultimate objective of ensuring that the respective programmes of work of the General Assembly, ECOSOC and their subsidiary bodies reflect the structure and spirit of the 2030 Agenda.

In response to the mandate in GA resolution 72/313, she referred to the General Committee meeting held on 5 December to solicit views of its members on the alignment process. She stressed the need for delegations to come up with an acceptable methodology and timeframe to address the matter, underscored the importance of building on the work carried out during previous sessions and urged delegations to support the Co-chairs on Alignment, the Permanent Representatives of Timor-Leste and the Czech Republic, to ensure a successful outcome.

Regarding the HLPF, convened under the auspices of both the ECOSOC in July and the General Assembly in September, the President of the General Assembly emphasized the importance of coordination, as General Assembly resolution 70/299 called for only one negotiated political declaration to be adopted at the HLPF, under the auspices of the General Assembly. A concise

and action-oriented political declaration is needed that sends a strong political message for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

On financing for development (FfD), while referring both to the ECOSOC Forum on FfD and the GA High-Level Dialogue on FfD, the President of the General Assembly highlighted the need to avoid duplication of discussions and the renegotiation of already agreed issues and principles. She highlighted her upcoming collaborative work with the President of ECOSOC to ensure coherence between the discussions at the FfD Forum and the High-level Dialogue. She also said that the High-Level Dialogue needs to be action-oriented and explore opportunities for engagement. The PGA also informed delegations of her intention to appoint co-facilitators to lead consultation on the modalities for the commemoration of the 75th anniversary of the UN, which would constitute Member States collective commitment to the UN and multilateralism.

Her Excellency Ms. Inga Rhonda King, President of the Economic and Social Council, focused her remarks on the preparations for the High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development, under the auspices of ECOSOC. Fifty-one countries will present Voluntary National Reviews. The theme of this year's forum is "Empowering People and Ensuring Inclusiveness and Equality", and the President will prepare a substantive summary. In addition, she noted that the PGA will leverage the opportunity created by the ECOSOC Youth Forum to strengthen the General Assembly's engagement with young people.

On the alignment process, she highlighted the need for thorough and effective preparations of the consultations. She outlined the work carried out in implementing General Assembly resolution 72/305 on the strengthening of ECOSOC. The two HLPFs this year will be an example of how the General Assembly and ECOSOC can successfully work in sync. The ECOSOC President together with the Bureau are determined to ensure that ECOSOC fully supports the work of the General Assembly.

The President of ECOSOC also discussed the ECOSOC Forum on FfD to be held 15 to 18 April 2019, which offers the opportunity to review the first four years of implementation of the Addis Ababa Action Agenda, and the General Assembly High-level Dialogue on FfD, to be held back to back with the HLPF in September. In preparing for the ECOSOC FfD Forum in 2019, the President aimed for an inclusive process that fulfills the commitment made in Addis Ababa to ensure multi-stakeholder participation.

Key messages from the interactive discussion

During the discussion and exchange of views that followed, twenty-eight delegations¹ took the floor, focusing on alignment, the high-level political forum on sustainable development (HLPF)

¹ State of Palestine (on behalf of the G77 and China); Belize (on behalf of the Alliance of Small Island States); European Union; Thailand; Colombia; Switzerland; Trinidad and Tobago; USA; Mexico; Norway; Kazakhstan, United Republic of Tanzania; Ghana; Islamic Republic of Iran; Liechtenstein; Russian Federation; Japan; Brazil; Croatia; Morocco; Bangladesh; Canada; Sierra Leone; Republic of Korea; China; Kenya; El Salvador; and Nicaragua.

and financing for development, as well as expressing general views related to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Several Member States also called for the need to continue the practice of joint briefings by the Presidents of the General Assembly and Economic and Social Council.

Alignment

- It is important that alignment remains a Member State driven and owned process
- Coherence and coordination of the GA and ECOSOC is regarded as especially significant as the end of the first four-year cycle of the 2030 Agenda approaches. There is momentum to concretely address alignment. The 75th anniversary of the United Nations presents a timely occasion to realize alignment.
- The implementation of the 2030 Agenda requires the United Nations to “connect horizontally”, with related actions viewed through the lens of the entire Organization. Revitalizing the General Assembly’s work and coherence with the Council is linked to the overall reform of the United Nations.
- There is need for a thorough review and more in-depth analysis of previous proposals and suggestions to revitalize the Assembly.
- There is a need to address the critical gaps and targets in the agendas of the General Assembly and the Council:
 - The previous agenda realignment processes provided a useful basis for further deliberation;
 - There may be a need to create new agenda items, where appropriate, allowing SDG targets to be followed up and reviewed with equal attention given to all targets of the SDGs.
- Avoiding overlap and duplication is an important issue. While Member States acknowledged that efforts to reduce overlap have been ongoing for some time, there was emphasis on the need for rationalization of the agendas of the General Assembly and ECOSOC to establish synergies in their respective work to eliminate duplication and overlap and promote complementarity through:
 - addressing inefficiencies arising from work duplication, recognizing that any reform should lead to a better allocation of scarce resources system-wide
 - building on the outcomes and recommendations from the past alignment process from previous sessions in this area
 - provision of data from the Secretariat on the growth of resolutions since the Millennium Summit.
 - addressing duplication through practical solutions, discussing what can be cast off and what can be improved. Any exercise regarding overlap must prevent the elimination of substantive topics on existing agenda items

- consideration of biennialization and triennialization of some agenda items, together with elimination of items through a sunset clause, and the use of omnibus resolutions.
- There is a need to bring the Second Committee into alignment with the 2030 Agenda and transform it into a forum for meaningful and substantive discussions on achieving the SDGs. It should uphold the people-centred approach in its resolutions, reduce its overlap with the Third Committee (Social, Humanitarian, Cultural) and eliminate references to outdated documents.
- Member States could consider the review of agenda items with support from the Chairs and Bureaux of the Main Committees. Chairs of the Main Committees could also be asked to provide views on how their respective Committees have contributed to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda.
- The 2030 Agenda could be a separate standing item on the Assembly's plenary work programme.

HLPF in July and September

- There was a call to facilitate more efficient Voluntary National Reviews by increasing the time allotted for each country presentation.
- To be more effective, the VNRs could focus on practical cases.
- On a voluntary basis and upon request, ECOSOC, including its subsidiary bodies, could provide tailor-made, country-specific policy guidance and recommendations after the VNR presentations.
- The Global Sustainable Development Report will be an essential input and form the basis for the outcomes of the HLPFs. A request was made to include the report on the programme of the HLPF, under the auspices of ECOSOC, in July.
- There was a request to the President of ECOSOC to allocate more time to the SIDS agenda during the HLPF, under the auspices of ECOSOC, in July.
- It was also stated that the HLPF suffers from lack of attention due to an overcrowded agenda.
- There was a call for a frank, open discussion among Member States on what they would like to see for the HLPFs in July and September, on SDG implementation and the scope and format for the HLPF in September. This could include discussion on ways to strengthen its format and overall management.
- The HLPF Summit must make a strong case for strengthening reliable data.
- Formal meetings must be interactive for both government and non-government actors, as well as inclusion of the private sector.
- The HLPF political declaration in September should be a concise, action-oriented, consensus text and provide comprehensive guidance to the further implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

High-level Week of the General Assembly in September 2019

- There was an appeal for a coordinated approach across all processes related to the High-level Week, particularly the meetings of HLPF, High-Level Dialogue on FfD, and the mid-term review of the SAMOA Pathway.
- A deeper engagement of SIDS was called for in the processes on the FfD High-Level meeting to provide space to raise concerns of SIDS.
- Concerns were expressed about the increasing number of side events and the need to ensure that they do not overwhelm participation in the main events.
- It was also underlined that issues surrounding group of countries in special situations should be addressed adequately.

Financing for Development

- It will be important to use the ECOSOC FfD Forum in April and the High-Level Dialogue on FfD in September to address the financing gap in SDG implementation.
- Close coordination was urged between the co-facilitators of the FfD Forum and the High-level Dialogue on FfD in order to avoid overlap and duplication and to ensure that both events are meaningful.
- All efforts must be made to avoid imposing undue burden on Permanent Missions and Secretariat Staff involved in the ECOSOC and GA work on Financing for Development.

General Views on Implementation of 2030 Agenda

- The implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development requires greater coordination across the UN System.
- It was suggested that the General Assembly strengthen its focus on development issues.
- There was advocacy for a regional approach to assessing SDG implementation rather than a single country-based approach.
- Fast-track implementation of the QCPR was stressed to ensure that the UN delivers as one.
- The United Nations needs to develop new methods for measuring poverty. Overreliance on traditional measures of poverty has not proven reliable.
- The work of the General Assembly and ECOSOC needs to be more inclusive of stakeholders.
- There was a request for more discussion on the 75th anniversary of the United Nations.

Closing

In closing, the President of ECOSOC stated that it is reassuring that the upcoming high-level events in 2019 are a priority on the agendas of Member States. She pledged to pursue the initiatives already launched, conduct a more integrated review of the Sustainable Development Goals and open the Economic and Social Council more to young people.

The President of the General Assembly acknowledged the useful remarks and concrete proposals from Member States which supported the alignment of the work of the two organs. Streamlining the work of the General Assembly and ECOSOC will allow for a better use of scarce resources, and now is an opportune time to move forward on these processes and commit to tangible outcomes.