



THE PRESIDENT
OF THE
GENERAL ASSEMBLY

25 March 2019

Excellency,

I have the honor to refer to my letter dated 19 February 2019 related to the High-level thematic debate on the issue of inclusive development and inequality within and among countries to be convened on 14 May 2019 at 10:00 a.m., in the Trusteeship Council Chamber, at the United Nations Headquarters in New York.

Please find attached the concept paper of the High-level thematic debate. Further information will be circulated in due course. For any inquiry, your office may contact my Senior Adviser Ms. Xiaomei Li (xiaomei.li@un.org).

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

M. ESPINOSA
María Fernanda Espinosa Garcés

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

**The General Assembly High-level Thematic Debate on
Addressing Inequality toward Inclusive development
Concept Note
(14 May 2019, New York)**

Background

In accordance with the General Assembly resolutions 72/141 and 73/141 on the implementation of the outcome of the World Summit for Social Development and of the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly, the President of the General Assembly of the 73rd Session will convene a High-Level Thematic Debate (HLTD) on Addressing Inequality toward Inclusive Development on 14 May 2019 at the United Nations Headquarters in New York.

In its resolution A/RES/73/141 on the implementation of the outcome of the World Summit for Social Development and of the twenty-fourth special session, the General Assembly looked forward to “the convening by the President of the General Assembly of the high-level thematic debate on the issue of inclusive development and inequality within and among countries before the meeting of the high-level political forum in 2019”. In the same resolution, the General Assembly expressed deep concern that, more than 20 years after the convening of the World Summit for Social Development, progress has been slow and uneven, and major gaps remain.

In July and September 2019, the High-level Political Forum (HLPF), convened under the auspices of both the Economic and Social Council and the General Assembly, will focus on the theme “Empowering people and ensuring inclusiveness and equality”. The HLPF will conduct a review of Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) including SDG10 on reducing inequality within and among countries.

Recognizing that the extraordinary growth and progress that the world has seen in recent decades has excluded many people, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development pledges that no one will be left behind. It expresses commitment “to see the Goals and targets met for all nations and peoples and for all segments of society”. This broad aspiration is explicitly upheld by SDG10, which seeks to reduce inequality within and among countries. For the first time, world leaders are calling for action to reduce inequality, including but transcending income-based inequality. SDG10 also seeks to promote the inclusion of all and to ensure equal opportunity.

Four years into the Agenda's implementation, many countries are far from ensuring equal opportunities to all their people. Inequalities in access to health and education based on gender, age, disability status, race, class ethnicity, religion and migrant status persist. Economic inequality has risen within about half of all countries, including most high-income and many middle-income countries. The rich are becoming richer, the middle class is under pressure, and the living standards of people in poverty have barely improved. At the same time, inequality has declined in many countries, including most in Latin America and the Caribbean. Economic inequalities among countries have not increased but they are still higher than those observed within countries. The country where a person was born, or where they live, is an important determinant of their expected economic situation and opportunities in life. Within this context, it is also important to note the regional dimension of development, not only in enhancing knowledge on key drivers of inequality but also in dismantling the barriers to realizing more egalitarian societies, taking into account the complexities of different world regions.

Economic, social, political and spatial inequalities as well as those based on ethnicity, gender age, disability or migrant status contribute to the systematic exclusion of some social groups and to the intergenerational transmission of poverty. Lower levels of health and education go hand in hand with higher levels of poverty and unemployment. Family income is often an important factor affecting access to health services and education. Unequal access to opportunities feeds a vicious cycle of disadvantage and exclusion that persists across generations.

Progress in promoting inclusion and reducing inequality is not keeping pace with the aspirations of the 2030 Agenda. With just over eleven years left to the 2030 deadline, faster progress is essential. As the experiences of some region and many countries show, high and growing inequality is not inevitable. Policies matter. But unless inequality is deliberately addressed, progress will continue to favor only some groups of the population. Moreover, equality-oriented policies must be flexible enough to consider local, national and regional specificities.

Objective

The HLTD will provide opportunities for member states and other relevant stakeholders to assess progress made related to inequality reduction within and among countries, share best practices and engage in a substantive policy dialogue towards inclusive development, to contribute to relevant review at the HLPF later in 2019.

Format

The HLTD will have the Opening Segment, followed by Panel I – Setting the Stage: Overview on achieving the SDG 10 to reduce the inequality within and among countries, and Panel II – Setting the Example: Share the best practices from national and regional perspectives toward inclusive development, and conclude with a closing segment with reports by moderators from 2 panels. Interactive dialogue is encouraged after presentations by panelists.

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- 10:00-10:30** **Opening Segment**
- 10:30-13:00** **Panel I - Setting the Stage: Overview on progress in achieving SDG 10 to reduce inequality within and among countries**
- This session will provide a general assessment on the current situation of inequality within and among countries, including recent trends, growing/declining inequality, barriers that prevent certain groups (e.g. women, youth, persons with disabilities, older persons, and indigenous groups) from inclusive development; and make an overview on the progress made in achieving SDG 10, as well as the gaps and new or emerging issues.
- 15:00-17:30** **Panel II - Setting the Example: Share the best practices from national and regional perspectives toward inclusive development**
- This session will provide both national and regional experiences in implementing SDG 10 to showcase best practices. Discussion will focus on what we can learn from countries that have been successful at curbing increases in inequality and at promoting inclusive development; how regional cooperation can support the promotion of knowledge exchange, multi-stakeholder dialogue and innovative partnerships towards reducing inequality.
- 17:30-18:00** **Closing Segment**