



THE PRESIDENT  
OF THE  
GENERAL ASSEMBLY

7 May 2020

Excellency,

The evolving COVID-19 pandemic and its wide-ranging effect continues to impact the health and livelihoods of the people we serve. The crisis is bringing to light the vulnerabilities in our systems. It is deepening pre-existing inequalities within and among nations, putting immense strain on tenuous systems and plunging those in the most precarious situations into deeper poverty.

This pandemic comes as we embark on the Decade of Action and Delivery to implement the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and we risk losing the gains we have made. We must, thus, galvanise multilateral action to defeat this menace and build resilient systems that can withstand the effects of the ongoing crisis and future shocks. As we contend with the COVID-19 pandemic, we must re-commit to eradicating poverty and, more broadly, the implementation of the SDGs.

In this regard, it is my pleasure to inform you that I will organise a virtual event in June to launch an Alliance for Poverty Eradication. The Alliance will serve as a forum for Member States to, among other things, raise awareness about the danger that poverty poses to world peace, human rights and sustainable development, and to galvanize Member States, the international community and other stakeholders to support actions geared towards poverty eradication.

The draft concept note of the initiative is enclosed. In developing the draft concept note, my Office consulted with Member States and I am pleased to acknowledge the positive response and support we have received thus far. My Office is available to discuss further with all delegations and I encourage you to reach out at your convenience. Enquiries and comments should be directed to the focal points in my office, Professor Jide Balogun, Special Adviser, ([murtala.balogun@un.org](mailto:murtala.balogun@un.org)) and Mr. Yazid Abdull, Special Assistant, ([yazid.abdull@un.org](mailto:yazid.abdull@un.org)).

I avail myself of this opportunity to express my solidarity with Member States who are fighting COVID-19 and extend my sincere condolences for their loss.

While counting on your support, constructive engagement and participation in this initiative, please accept, Excellency, the assurances of my highest consideration.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Tijjani Muhammad-Bande'.

Tijjani Muhammad-Bande

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



**CONCEPT NOTE**  
**ON**  
**THE FORMATION OF AN ALLIANCE FOR POVERTY**  
**ERADICATION WITHIN THE UNITED NATIONS**

**Background**

In outlining his vision for his office, the President of the 74<sup>th</sup> Session of the General Assembly had undertaken, among other things, to:

- (a) implement existing mandates effectively;
- (b) support efforts aimed at maintaining global peace and security;
- (c) strengthen global action geared towards tackling climate change;
- (d) accentuate inclusiveness, human rights and the empowerment of youth and women; and
- (f) strengthen partnerships for advancing the attainment of the SDGs (especially, Goals 1,2, and 4).

2. However, making an impact in any of the preceding areas warrants that credible answers be found to a troubling and recurring question, that is, poverty within and across the world's regions. Poverty, along with widening inequality, constitutes a major obstacle to the fulfilment of human needs, and to the attainment of the Sustainable Development Goals.

3. Poverty appears in different forms, notably, as a lack of access to food, shelter, healthcare, potable water, sanitation, and to whatever makes life worth living. It has been identified as a major trigger of stress in expectant mothers, and consequently, as the leading cause of pre- and post-

natal complications. Poverty manifests in different forms, notably, as inability to meet basic needs, persistent feeling of distress and hopelessness, declining self-esteem, social exclusion, including exclusion from decision-making structures, as well as the lack of capacity to think, act and live independently. According to the UN, poverty is a denial of choice and opportunities, a violation of human dignity, and lack of capacity to participate actively in society.

### **Poverty trends: a global snapshot**

4. Before COVID-19 practically shut down socio-economic activities across the globe, the number of people classified as poor was approximately 2.1 billion. Of this number, 767 million were found to be living in *extreme poverty*. While the extent of the damage wrought by COVID-19 to world economy is yet to be determined, the pandemic threatens not only to erase past gains but also to force an additional half a billion of the world population into poverty. Already the social distancing practices dictated by the pandemic are already triggering plant shutdowns and employee layoffs across countries, rich and poor.

5. According a study released by Kings College London and the Australian National University in the first week of April 2020, approximately 850 million (roughly 8 percent of humanity) risked falling into poverty as a result of the sharp fall in economic activity in every part of the COVID-19 ravaged world. It is further estimated that a 5 percent decline in household income in rich countries would automatically lead to sharp declines in economic opportunities in countries that are already poverty-stricken, as well as the addition of between 85 million and 135 million to the number in poverty.

6. The regions that are most at risk are Sub-Saharan Africa, the Middle East and North Africa, and South Asia. With a poverty rate of 41.1 percent, Sub-Saharan Africa tops the list of poverty-ravaged regions. The poverty rate for South Asia is 12.4 per cent; for Latin America and the Caribbean, 4.1 percent; for East Asia and the Pacific, 2.3 percent; and for Europe and Central Asia, 1.5 percent. Table 1 provides a breakdown of poverty across the world's regions up to April 2018.

**Table 1: Poverty estimates for reference year 2013: Comparison of October 2017 and April 2018 versions**

Region	Survey coverage (%)		\$1.90: headcount ratio (%)		\$1.90: number of poor (mil)		\$3.20: headcount ratio (%)		\$3.20: number of poor (mil)		\$5.50: headcount ratio (%)		\$5.50: number of poor (mil)	
	Oct 2017	Apr 2018	Oct 2017	Apr 2018	Oct 2017	Apr 2018	Oct 2017	Apr 2018	Oct 2017	Apr 2018	Oct 2017	Apr 2018	Oct 2017	Apr 2018
	East Asia and Pacific	96.5	97.7	3.7	3.6	73.9	73.2	17.6	17.6	354	352	42.6	42.5	855
Europe and Central Asia	90.7	90.7	2.2	1.6	10.4	7.7	6.8	5.8	32.8	27.7	14.9	14.1	72.1	67.8
Latin America and the Caribbean	91.7	91.6	4.9	4.5	30.1	27.8	11.6	11.3	71.0	69.5	27.3	27.1	167	166
Middle East and North Africa	78.0	77.7	2.3	2.7	8.3	9.6	13.1	14.5	47.1	52.0	40.8	42.7	146	153
South Asia	98.3	98.1	14.7	15.1	249	257	52.0	52.6	883	894	83.2	83.5	1414	1418
Sub-Saharan Africa	49.6	69.1	41.0	42.3	390	401	66.5	67.5	633	639	85.0	85.2	809	807
Other High-Income Economies	68.9	76.1	0.6	0.6	6.5	6.4	0.9	0.9	9.7	9.5	1.5	1.5	15.9	15.9
World Total	84.9	88.8	10.7	10.9	769	783	28.3	28.6	2031	2044	48.4	48.7	3479	3481

Source: The World Bank

7. Even when COVID-19 is finally defeated, the world will still wrestle with new challenges—notably, restoring and sustaining investor confidence, keeping production engines working at full capacity, reabsorbing and reassuring laid off employees, restarting comatose economies, strengthening linkages between and among sectors, and making up for productivity losses.

8. It is worth noting that roughly 75 per cent of the world’s poor currently reside in rural areas. This category depends on subsistence agriculture and lacks access to resources and economic opportunities. Constantly wrestling with infrastructure deficits, archaic technologies and human development challenges, the poor faces insuperable obstacles making ends meet. In poor societies, wide income disparities and inequalities persist between and among economic classes, between rural and urban areas, between men and women, and among regions or communities.

### **UN and Poverty Eradication**

9. The UN has passed many resolutions targeted at the eradication of poverty. These are some of the pertinent resolutions:

- A/RES/50/107 which proclaimed 1997-2006 as the First United Nations Decade for the Eradication of Poverty;
- A/RES/62/205 also proclaimed 2008-2017 as the Second United Nations Decade for the Eradication of Poverty and requested the Secretary-General to appoint a focal point to coordinate the implementation of the Second Decade for the Eradication of Poverty;
- A/RES/72/235 of 18 January 2018 which views human resources development, and, particularly, investment in health and education, as critical to economic, social and environmental development, and underscored the need to institute measures aimed at eliminating barriers to job creation, full employment, and labour productivity;
- A/RES/72/233 which proclaimed 2018-2027 as the Third United Nations Decade for the Eradication of Poverty and approved “Accelerating global actions for a world without poverty” as the theme of its 73<sup>rd</sup> Session;
- A/RES/47/196, of 22 December 2019, declaring October 17 of every year the International Day for the Eradication of Poverty and calling on the international community, including Member States and the relevant organizations of the UN, to continue to accord the highest priority to poverty eradication within the United Nations development agenda; and
- A/RES/74/237 observes that nearly 80 percent of the extreme poor live in rural areas and work in agriculture. It also identifies the pillars for rural poverty eradication, notably, quality education, improved health care, scaled up social protection, financial inclusion, job creation, as well as closure of gaps in infrastructure development and in the provision of basic services.

### **Need for a Multilateral Alliance Against Poverty**

10. In line with his Agenda for the 74th Session, the President of the General Assembly is anxious to sensitize the international community to the danger which poverty poses, particularly, to peace and stability, and to good governance and development. He strongly believes that poverty has grave implications for access to major public goods, especially, peace and security, food and nutrition, quality education, and security against

extreme weather and climatic fluctuations. Acknowledging poverty as a major trigger of conflict, the PGA is of the view that the cause of peace will be greatly served if sustained efforts are made to eradicate poverty. In any case, preventing conflict, resettling internally displaced persons, and stemming the lopsided flow of migrants from one region to another require that measures be instituted to tackle poverty at its root and wherever it surfaces.

11. The COVID-19 pandemic has, in any case, underscored the need for an alliance of minds and of actions against poverty. While the natural reaction of each UN Member State to a disaster of this magnitude is to worry about its unique and immediate socio-economic reconstruction hardships, the solution *in fact* lies in all nations working together for the good of all. The case for international cooperation, at this juncture, rests not only on the broad principle of inter-dependence (or of interconnected of human destiny) but also on the practical consideration of collective survival. A world in which the rich quickly recovers from a tragedy while leaving the poor behind will not be sustainable in the long run.

12. More than at any other time, COVID-19 has underlined the necessity for all nations to come to common cause on the measures to adopt to ensure that the losses inflicted by the pandemic are quickly recouped. While it is tempting to focus on the here and now, and to allow the search for instant solutions to post-COVID-19 headaches to overshadow other concerns, it is only when the world boldly confronts the poverty challenge that it can be sure of recovering quickly and fully from the pandemic's devastating impact. This requires at the minimum that all hands be on deck, that every able-bodied person on the face of the earth is put to work, and that the rich helps the poor to become economically active and value-adding agents.

12. Given the foregoing, it is absolutely necessary to prioritize the implementation of measures for the eradication of poverty. Now is the time when the world's women and men must come together to remove the blot which poverty leaves on humanity's conscience, when national legislative assemblies must enact laws that dismantle the fortresses of exclusion and inequality, when governments must implement measures in support of wealth and job creation and sustainable development, and when hands

rendered idle by the COVID-19 pandemic should be strengthened and put to work.

13. Confronting the poverty challenge in the manner earlier described clearly requires the backing of a formidable alliance. The Alliance or group will ideally start with a nucleus of like-minded countries and move steadily to bring others on board. When fully operational, the Alliance will be the leading voice for poverty eradication. It will constantly bring to the front burner the issue of poverty eradication. It will galvanize other UN Member States and raise awareness about the danger that poverty constitutes to world peace, to human rights and to sustainable development. The Alliance will, above all, ensure that the resources needed to eradicate poverty are duly mobilized, optimally allocated, and properly accounted for.

### ***Nomenclature of the Group***

14. The name, by which the group would be known, will be decided by the members. However, to mark it apart from the existing groups of friends, it is proposed that the group be designated *Alliance Against Poverty or Alliance for Poverty Eradication*.

### **The Alliance's Aims and Objectives**

15. Subject to the approval of the members, the aims and objectives of the Alliance will be to:

- (a) Provide a forum at which participants would deliberate on measures that need to be instituted so as to get the world economy working in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic;
- (b) Canvass support for efforts that have proved effective in alleviating and ultimately eradicating poverty within and across the world's regions;
- (c) Ensure adequate preparation and logistics back-up for the organization of the annual Colloquium on Poverty Eradication Strategies;
- (d) Review progress and challenges in the attainment of SDGs' poverty eradication targets;
- (e) Ensure that, under its leadership and that of the pen-holders, the International Day for the Eradication of Poverty is celebrated on

the 17<sup>th</sup> of October of every year as provided for in General Assembly resolution A/RES/47/196;

- (f) Raise general awareness about poverty and about progress or setbacks in eradicating it within and across countries and regions;
- (g) Draw attention to factors militating against the eradication of poverty, and the measures needed to neutralize poverty's causative and enabling factors;
- (h) Serve as a forum for the exchange of ideas, information, financing strategies, and international good practices in poverty eradication;
- (i) Lend support to efforts at the mobilization of resources, and if possible, the establishment of a special Fund, for the eradication of poverty; and
- (j) Receive reports on progress and challenges in poverty eradication as submitted from time to time by the Focal Point for Poverty Eradication.

16. The Alliance will achieve its aims by coming up with actionable strategies in the areas of partnerships, mobilization of resources, networking and information sharing. In line with General Assembly Resolution, A/RES/47/196, of 22 December 2019, and with the cooperation of the penholders, the Alliance will ensure that October 17 of every year is marked as the International Day for the Eradication of Poverty.

17. The Alliance will further organize, sponsor, or promote interventions designed to accelerate the pace of poverty eradication within and across regions. Among matters having direct or indirect bearing on poverty and its eradication are development planning models, plan implementation strategies, public administration practices, as well as policies on rural infrastructure development/rehabilitation, quality education, health care, employment generation, and social protection.

18. In carrying out its functions, the Alliance will avail itself of appropriate UN instruments and mechanisms as well as other methods as agreed by the members.

## **Membership and Structure**

19. Membership of the Alliance would be open to all interested UN Member States. Co-Facilitators would be selected to enable harmonious coordination of the Alliance's activities. UN Agencies will be invited to the meetings of the Alliance to provide technical backup, and present up-to-date data on matters falling within their areas of competence.

20. The Alliance will also decide the institutional support it needs to implement on-going projects and ensure the projects' follow up and sustainability.

### **Institutional Back-up**

21. The UN Focal Point for the Eradication of Poverty will, in addition to its other tasks, backstop the Alliance's activities.