



**REPORT OF THE HIGH-LEVEL MEETING**

**ON**

**“TRENDS, OPTIONS AND STRATEGIES IN POVERTY  
ERADICATION ACROSS THE WORLD”  
AND THE INAUGURATION OF THE ALLIANCE FOR  
POVERTY ERADICATION**

**(TUESDAY, 30 JUNE 2020)**

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## Executive Summary

On 30 June 2020, H.E., Prof. Tijjani Muhammad-Bande, President of the 74th Session of the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA), convened a Virtual High-Level Meeting on Poverty Eradication. The theme of the meeting was “Trends, Options and Strategies in Poverty Eradication Across the World”. The Meeting was preceded by the formal inauguration of the Alliance for Poverty Eradication.

2. The objectives of the twin event include:

- (a) Formal inauguration of the Alliance for Poverty Eradication as a mechanism for sustainable engagement, and for galvanizing multilateral and bilateral efforts at the United Nations for poverty eradication;
- (b) Kick-starting a series of policy dialogues on poverty eradication, bringing together world leaders, policy makers, corporate leaders, renowned academics, civil society groups and other stakeholders; and
- (c) Galvanizing support for poverty eradication as the Number One Sustainable Development Goal and against the backdrop of the challenges posed by COVID-19 pandemic.

3. The highlights of the High-Level event included the screening of a video message from His Excellency President Muhammadu Buhari, President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, as well as the delivery of statements by other eminent personalities. The speakers at the Opening Segment included the President of the General Assembly, H.E. Prof. Tijjani Muhammad-Bande; the Secretary General of the United Nations, H.E. Mr. Antonio Guterres; the President of the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), H.E. Ms. Mona Juul; the Charge d’ Affaires, Permanent Mission of Nigeria to the United Nations and Interim the Coordinator of the Poverty Eradication Alliance, H.E. Mr. Samson Iteboje; the Deputy Secretary General of United Nations, Mrs. Amina Muhammed; and the Special Rapporteur on Extreme Poverty and Human Rights, Professor Oliver De Schutter.

4. The Meeting also featured goodwill messages from the Honourable Minister for Poverty Eradication and Special Assistant to the Prime Minister of Pakistan, Dr. Sania Nishtar; the Head of Strategy and Budget at the President’s Office, Turkey, Mr. Naci Agbal; and the Minister-Private Secretary for National Policies, Office of the President of the Republic of Nicaragua, Dr. Paul Oquist Kelley.

5. The Opening Segment was followed by Panel Discussions, moderated by the UN Under Secretary General for Global Communications, Ms. Melissa Fleming. The session featured presentations by six panelists, notably, the Director-General of the ILO; the Director-General of the FAO; the Secretary-General of UNCTAD; the Executive Secretary and Under-Secretary General, UN Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean; the World Bank's Special Representative to the United Nations, and an Associate Administrator of the UNDP.

6. The Meeting ended with closing remarks by the President of the General Assembly.

7. The deliberations as well as the conclusions and recommendations of the High-Level Meeting are presented in the succeeding pages.

## Opening Segment

H.E., Prof. Tijjani Muhammad-Bande, President of the 74th Session of the United Nations General Assembly

8. The President of the United Nations General Assembly (PGA), H.E. Prof. Tijjani Mohammad-Bande, welcomed participants to the virtual meeting, which, as he noted, was taking place at a time when the world was wrestling with unprecedented public health challenges. He underscored the significance of the event, more so, as it marked the inauguration of the Alliance for Poverty eradication as well as the first in a series of policy dialogues or colloquia on Poverty Eradication. He affirmed that alongside quality education and inclusion, the eradication of poverty is among the key priorities of the 74<sup>th</sup> session. He expressed the hope that the event would strengthen the coordination of multilateral and multi-pronged efforts to eradicate poverty.

9. The PGA described poverty as the most formidable obstacle to the attainment of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). He highlighted its manifestations as lack of access to decent jobs; healthcare; education; food; shelter; sanitation and portable water, amongst others. The PGA added that poverty had been identified as a major factor in expectant mothers' stress and as the leading cause of pre- and post-natal complications. He was of the view that conflict and civil strife would not last long if poverty, the underlying trigger, was eliminated. He remarked that the youths that risk their lives migrating to foreign lands are driven, not by a spirit of adventure or by any expeditionary zeal, but by the resolve to escape the oppressive grip of poverty.

10. The PGA depicted poverty as a bad situation made even worse by the COVID-19 pandemic. He noted that before the onset of the pandemic, 2.1 billion people were classified as poor globally, with 767 million living in extreme poverty. He alluded to a gloomy forecast suggesting that by the year 2030, more than 100 million people would, thanks to COVID-19 and climate change, have relapsed into poverty.

11. The PGA cited a study released jointly by Kings College London and the Australian National University in the first week of April 2020; the study paints a grim

picture, showing that approximately 850 million people (roughly 8 percent of humanity) risked falling into poverty due to the sharp decline in economic activity in every part of the COVID-19- ravaged world. The study 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 of people in poverty.

12. The PGA recalled that the International Labour Organization (ILO) has also highlighted the devastating impact of COVID-19 on employment, especially among youth and women. The Organization put the youth unemployment rate in 2019 at 13.6 percent, a figure higher than for any other demographic group. According to the ILO, approximately 267 million young people worldwide were either unemployed or were not receiving the education and training they needed to be employable. Youths aged 15 to 24 years were likely to be in low-paying jobs or to live precariously in the informal sector or as migrant workers. He stated that the qualitative dimension of poverty is as troubling as its quantitative equivalent.

13. The PGA was particularly worried that inequality was not only widening but was also reinforcing social exclusion as well as opportunity-denying tendencies across the world's regions. Contrary to the underlying aim of Agenda 2030, millions are being left behind as poverty deepens and inequality widens. He conceded the fact that the United Nations had been at the forefront of the struggle against poverty and inequality. He cited a number of General Assembly resolutions on poverty as evidence of the international community's concern over the depth and scale of global poverty. He stated that the time had come to move from platitudes to action, and from a strategy that relies on fragmented and sporadic raids on poverty to one that is anchored on a multisided and holistic attack on poverty. The multidimensional nature of poverty and the need for a multi-pronged attack on it between them provide a clear justification for the establishment of the Poverty Eradication Alliance.

14. The PGA believed that the Alliance was well-placed to serve as a one-stop centre for networking, information sharing and bridge-building. He assured that when fully operational, the Poverty Eradication Alliance would organize, sponsor, or promote interventions designed to accelerate the pace of poverty eradication within

and across regions. Also, development planning models, plan implementation strategies, public administration practices, as well as policies on food and agriculture, rural infrastructure development, quality education, health care, employment generation, entrepreneurship development, and social protection would be among themes to be closely examined at policy dialogues sponsored by the Alliance.

15. The PGA expressed appreciation to Nigeria's Charge d'Affaires a. i., Ambassador Samson S. Iteboje, for accepting to serve as the Interim Coordinator of the Alliance.

16. The PGA ended his opening address by announcing the formal inauguration of the Alliance for Poverty Eradication, and the organization of the High-Level Meeting on Poverty Eradication, the first in the series of colloquia on the same subject (Annex A is the List of Members of the Alliance).

*Statement by the UN Secretary-General, H.E., Mr. Antonio Guterres*

17. The UN Secretary-General thanked the PGA for organizing the High-Level Meeting and stated that the time was ripe to focus on the eradication of poverty in all its forms everywhere. He noted that the COVID-19 pandemic had exacerbated stark inequalities in the world, and highlighted the other social challenges, ranging from inadequate housing to lack of universal social protection. He added that societies and citizens of the world are paying a heavy price for the pandemic which is placing further obstacles to the attainment of the SDGs.

18. The Secretary-General viewed poverty eradication as central to the 2030 Agenda. He noted with concern the reversal of previous gains in poverty eradication, and the widening inequality within and between countries. He further noted that the COVID-19 pandemic disproportionately affects the poor and vulnerable groups such as women and children, persons with disabilities and other marginalized groups.

19. The Secretary-General emphasized the need for measures aimed at speeding up post-COVID-19 recovery and enabling the world to build back better. According to him, opportunities must be leveraged to design and implement people-centred economic recovery programmes, and to create decent jobs as a means of lifting

affected populations out of poverty. The Secretary-General stressed that meaningful poverty eradication policies should accord with the normative frameworks alluded to in the SDGs and the Paris Agreement.

20. The Secretary-General urged countries to strengthen their capacities for data collection and analysis, to create decent jobs, and promote the resilience of Micro Small- and Medium-Scale Enterprises, including women-led businesses. Social protection nets must also be extended to groups hitherto left out.

21. The Secretary-General called for urgent international action to support developing countries as they struggle with the ravages of COVID-19 and the poverty menace. This would entail the allocation of resources equivalent to 10 percent of the global economy, the provision of liquidity and financial assistance, and the rescheduling and postponement of debt repayment on concessional terms or at least, in a way that does not impose additional burdens on the poor countries. He saw a close link between healthcare and environmental wellbeing, on the one hand, and socio-economic development, on the other.

22. The Secretary-General observed that global challenges are enormous, complex and interdependent. Tackling them thus require inputs from all parties, including governments, individuals, civil society, private sector, development partners. Any global action for the eradication of poverty must rely on the active involvement of all.

*Statement by the President of ECOSOC, H. E. Mona Juul*

23. The President of the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), H.E. Mona Juul, in a video message, noted that people were suffering as a result of the current global pandemic. According to her, the pandemic continues to upend lives and livelihoods, with staggering human costs and economic consequences. She observed that unemployment was soaring while investments and remittances were falling. Not surprisingly, global poverty rose for the first time in 30 years. The ECOSOC President warned that the goal of achieving the poverty eradication goal of the 2030 Agenda was under considerable threat.



24. She therefore welcomed the launching of the Alliance for Poverty Eradication. She saw the Alliance as a timely response to the poverty challenge. She applauded the efforts made and the solidarity shown by governments, businesses, multilateral organizations and civil society in combatting the COVID-19 pandemic. She expressed the hope that the same level of urgency and concerted efforts would, in the decade of action and delivery, be demonstrated in the fight against poverty.

25. The ECOSOC President pledged the support of the Council to the Alliance, especially, since poverty eradication is at the core of the Council's mandate. She stated that ECOSOC has unique convening powers, bringing together valuable constituencies such as youth and the private sector. She stressed that the world must fight poverty by engaging women, men and youth in a spirit of solidarity and mutual respect. She emphasized that women must be at the centre of all development efforts and that the Alliance for Poverty Eradication should not be an exception. She observed that the Alliance could create a new momentum for solidarity and collective action, all with a view to shifting world attention to a resilient development path, that is a path leading to the realization of human rights for all.

26. The ECOSOC President stated that early recovery from the current global pandemic and the associated economic downturn is dependent on a recommitment to global cooperation guided by the 2030 Agenda. Acknowledgement of poverty eradication as an indispensable requirement for sustainable development is also essential. She observed that the world was not lacking in the capacity for innovation; what was needed was political will.

*Statement by the Interim Coordinator of the Alliance for Poverty Eradication, Ambassador Samson S. Iteboje*

27. Speaking in his capacity as Interim Coordinator of the Alliance for Poverty Eradication, the Charge d'Affaires of Nigeria, H.E. Ambassador Samson Iteboje, lamented the pervasive nature of poverty, especially in the developing world, noting that, apart from the devastating impact of COVID-19, poverty remained the most topical issue facing the global community. He, therefore, commended the PGA for his commitment to the ideal of leaving no one behind. The decision to launch the Poverty Eradication Alliance at the outset of the decade for action and delivery of the

SDGs is a clear demonstration of this commitment. The Ambassador also expressed appreciation for the opportunity to serve as the Interim Coordinator of the Alliance. He reiterated the importance of eradicating poverty which is the number one goal among the SDGs.

28. Ambassador Iteboje observed that in the developing world, poverty with its associated multiple deprivations, has the greatest effect on the economy than any other contemporary problem. He alluded to the Copenhagen Declaration of 1995, which succinctly stated that poverty has various manifestations including: lack of income and productive resources; hunger and malnutrition; ill health; limited or lack of access to education and other basic services; high morbidity rates; homelessness and inadequate housing; unsafe environment; social discrimination; exclusion from political processes; and denial of civil and political rights.

29. The Interim Coordinator affirmed that no Member State could lay any legitimate claim to sustainable development unless and until it conquers the poverty challenge. He recalled the commitment of all UN Member States in 2015 to end poverty and hunger everywhere, to combat inequalities within and among countries and to create peaceful, just and inclusive societies by 2030. He noted that these aspirations of Member States could only be achieved if poverty is eradicated in its various forms and dimensions.

30. Ambassador Iteboje felt that time was ripe for the international community to develop structures and strategies to address the scourge of poverty. He added that the Alliance for Poverty Eradication must therefore offer hope and chart a new course for poverty eradication. The Alliance should canvass measures needed to reverse the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, paying particular attention to how the pandemic eroded past poverty eradication gains, threatened to derail efforts at attaining the targets set out in the 2030 Agenda, and further threatened to push about half a billion people into extreme poverty.

31. The Interim Coordinator urged the Alliance to pay keener attention to and mobilize support for wealth creation and poverty eradication. In this regard, he remarked that Micro Small and Medium Scale Enterprises (MSMEs) offer hope to the most vulnerable in the society. He accordingly advised the Alliance to exploit the

potentials of informal sector operators, while at the same time leveraging the benefits of ICT, as well as technical and vocational education. At the same time, the Alliance should focus on the poverty eradication opportunities in the various sectors of the economy, especially, agriculture, manufacturing, tourism, health, education, and energy generation and distribution.

32. The Interim Coordinator urged the newly launched Alliance for Poverty Eradication to stimulate discussions on best ways to formulate poverty eradication policies and strategies. He noted that poverty is multifaceted and deeply rooted, and as such, an effective poverty eradication strategy must reflect its multi-dimensional nature, incorporating economic, social, cultural and political dimensions. He added that achieving the SDGs through poverty eradication would require the collective commitment of all stakeholders involved, including international financial institutions, the private sector, civil society, and the academia. On a final note, he pledged his country's commitment to pursuing the goals of the Alliance through the newly created framework.

*Statement by Professor Olivier Schutter, UN Special Rapporteur on Extreme Poverty and Human Rights*

33. Professor Schutter commended the PGA for the timely initiative to establish the Alliance for Poverty Eradication. He stated that the initiative is extremely important for three reasons: first, the numbers of people in extreme poverty are still unacceptably high. The world has so far failed to achieve Goal 1 of the SDGs (poverty eradication). Equally significant is the fact that global poverty, as witnessed today, is not a result of natural disasters but of inappropriate policy choices.

34. The Special Rapporteur called for a policy-oriented study on why people are still poor. He attempted to proffer answers, noting that 55 percent of the global population do not have access to any form of social protection; only 29 percent have access to the full range of social protection. Also, 51 percent of the global workforce lacks access to social protection and is without a guarantee of a minimum wage that would ensure a decent standard of living.

35. The second role that the Special Rapporteur envisages for the Alliance is collaboration with other stakeholders in improving global governance practices. He recalled efforts to revitalize the Committee on World Food Security, following the global food crisis of 2008-2009. The action brought together all relevant government officials, UN agencies, the private sector, CSOs and others to reach a common understanding of the causes of hunger and mal-nutrition, and to assist the movement towards policy convergence. The Poverty Eradication Alliance could serve a similar purpose by encouraging policy convergence in such areas as trade, investment, intellectual property rights and development cooperation. The Special Rapporteur called for collaboration on trade, investment, international property rights and other interventions critical to the realization of SDG 1.

36. The third justification for the establishment of the Alliance for Poverty Eradication is the need to support the efforts of developing countries in establishing social protection floors. The establishment of social protection floors is in line with the commitment made by the International Labour Organization (ILO) through recommendation 202 adopted in June 2012. The Special Rapporteur observed that many developing countries currently face serious budget deficits, thus making it difficult for them to finance robust social protection programmes.

37. The Special Rapporteur disclosed that he was working with some other interested parties to establish a Global Fund for Social Protection. When fully operational, the Fund would perform three functions, namely: a coordinating function to ensure that the different efforts deployed to strengthen social protection in developing countries work harmoniously. Secondly, the Fund would have a financing function. Specifically, it will be expected to mobilize resources to support the developing countries in bridging financing gaps and in establishing social protection floors.

38. The Fund's third function is the provision of a reinsurance facility. Such a facility would allow poor countries to be overcome economic, climatic and other obstacles to the establishment and effective functioning of social protection systems. The idea is for them to reinsure themselves against shocks, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, that may cause immediate liquidity problems and make it impossible to maintain the level of social protection commitments already given to the population.

## Panel Discussions

### Statement by President Muhammadu Buhari of Nigeria

39. The panel discussions began with a statement by H.E. President Muhammadu Buhari, the President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. He commended the foresight in establishing the Alliance for Poverty Eradication. He noted with concern the threat that COVID-19 pandemic poses to decades of progress in poverty eradication. He found it troubling that over 700 million people or 10 percent of the world population are living in extreme poverty and are struggling with the most basic needs such as nutrition, shelter, health, education, clean water, and sanitation.

40. President Buhari stated that the current crisis shows how interconnected the world is. Mitigating the impact of the pandemic requires close collaboration among various stakeholders. The President stated further that over 54 percent of Nigeria's estimated 200 million population are not only living in poverty but also face real prospects of sliding into extreme poverty.

41. President Buhari recalled that because of the great importance Nigeria attaches to poverty eradication, the Government in May 2019, committed itself to lifting 100 million Nigerians out of poverty within a ten-year period. He remarked that in Nigeria, as in many other countries, the domestic supply chains and trading corridors have come under enormous strain. This has sparked off a debate between the imperatives of health, and the craving for economic growth.

42. The President lauded global leaders for giving attention to the choices and priorities to mitigate the impact of the unprecedented public health challenge. He added that the outcome of the ongoing dialogue would be critical for the West African sub-region and for other regions with substantially high proportions of informal sector and daily paid workers.

43. President Buhari informed the High-Level Meeting that, in response to the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic, his government recently developed an economic sustainability plan aimed at stimulating the economy and extending

protection to the very poor and other vulnerable groups. In the President's view, attaining the underlying food security and poverty eradication objectives hinges on the adoption of measures such as human capital development, efficient management of resources, greater financial inclusion, and the transformation of agriculture and food supply chains. This informed Nigeria's decision to integrate the economic, social, and environmental dimensions of the SDGs into its development plans

44. The President also informed the High-Level Meeting about Nigeria's decision to strengthen existing social safety nets by increasing access to the scheme and by providing the eligible beneficiaries needed relief. He added that, through the government Enterprise and Empowerment Programme, Nigeria would continue to expand and facilitate access to financial services as required by Small and Medium-Scale enterprises.

45. President Buhari noted that, besides its role as a critical driver of sustainable development, education has immense capacity to eradicate poverty. He stressed that education, especially of the girl child, contributes significantly to poverty eradication, environmental sustainability, improved health, peace building and to the construction of resilient societies. He therefore welcomed the launch of the Alliance for Poverty Eradication and endorsed all multilateral actions aimed at eradicating the scourge of poverty and accelerating the realization of the SDGs.

*Goodwill message from Dr. Sania Nishtar, Minister for Poverty Eradication, Pakistan*

46. The Federal Minister for Poverty Eradication and Special Assistant to the Prime Minister of Pakistan, Dr. Sania Nishtar, commended the PGA's timely decision to launch the Alliance on Poverty Eradication. Focusing on the socio-economic impact of COVID-19, the Minister noted that the poverty eradication gains of the last three decades were severely at risk. At the same time, she saw the crisis as an opportunity. According to her, the pandemic presented the world with an opportunity to take proactive measures to reconstruct battered economies, while at the same time, paying attention to the imperatives of sustainable development, equity and fairness. For the reconstruction and recovery efforts to succeed, emphasis must be placed on addressing the concerns of groups hitherto and traditionally left behind, notably, the poor, the vulnerable and those without any form of social protection.

47. The Minister noted that, as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, livelihoods had been shattered, and that, unless urgent action was taken to extend social protection coverage to vulnerable groups, a whole generation risks living in the shadow of poverty.

48. Sharing Pakistan's experience, the Minister informed the High-Level Meeting that at the height of the COVID-19 crisis, the Pakistani government committed over 1 billion USD to providing social protection to over 16.5 million families, that is, approximately 120 million persons.

49. Minister Nishtar informed the Meeting about the process adopted in administering the emergency relief programme. She referred particularly to the decision to issue index/identification numbers to beneficiaries. To ensure transparency, the programme also relied on data analytics, text messaging and biometric verification, and beneficiary tracking. She described the process as the most extensive and transparent social protection operation ever undertaken in the history of Pakistan and in circumstances that were far from ideal or normal.

50. She disclosed plans by the government of Pakistan for a massive scaling-up of social protection operations through a new multisectoral framework called, "*EHSAAAS*", which in Urdu translates into "*compassion*."

51. The Minister underscored the necessity for precision (including the tracking of benefits and beneficiaries) in the implementation of social protection policies, and added that it informed the reliance of the *EHSAAAS* programme on 21<sup>st</sup> century digital tools.

52. She stated that though it is too early to provide new poverty figure she was certain that the COVID-19 pandemic had wreaked havoc on various demographic groups, especially, those on daily wages, retrenched or laid off workers, and others whose lives had been affected by disruptions in the local supply chain.

53. She observed that the COVID-19 fallout was not limited to the number of lives lost, but extends to the rising incidence of hunger, the interruption of school

children's learning, and the stress placed on limited healthcare facilities. She noted that women and girls were unfortunately liable to be disproportionately affected by the tragedy. She therefore fully supported the priority accorded poverty eradication. The protracted nature of COVID-19, in any case, left the world with no option but to keep a close eye on poverty and on measures for eradicating it.

54. She stated that the scale of action demanded from the global community is unprecedented, as there are 4 billion individuals without social protection globally. Speaking from her national perspective, she was optimistic that the world was equal to the challenge. She also took a philosophical view of the disasters, noting that they tend to be catalysts or forerunners of social change. She therefore saw a silver lining in the public health crisis. In her view, COVID-19 presented humanity with a unique opportunity to build a fairer world - a world against poverty, inequality and extreme climate fluctuation. She expressed confidence that the Alliance for Poverty Eradication would play an active role in the envisaged transformation.

*Goodwill message from the UN Deputy Secretary-General, Ms. Amina J Mohammed*

55. The UN Deputy Secretary General, Ms. Amina J. Mohammed joined many others in commending the PGA for the foresight leading to the establishment of the Alliance for Poverty Eradication. She saw the act impacting positively on accelerated attainment of the Sustainable Development Goals during the Decade of Action.

56. She drew attention to widening income disparities over the past three decades. According to her, over 70 percent of the world population had fallen victim to inequality. COVID-19 had exacerbated the situation, hitting the poorest section of society hardest, and throwing into sharp relief the inequity in income distribution. She cited empirical studies indicating that in several countries, the death rates in poor communities almost doubled those in their richer counterparts in the wake of COVID-19. Similarly, workers in the informal sector were disproportionately hit by the pandemic, with millions facing the prospects of job losses and relapse into poverty.

57. In response to the dire situation, the DSG urged the international community to place special emphasis on support to the small and medium sized enterprises as well as other avenues of social protection. She also called for stability in the international financial system. The measures flagged by her included the assurance of



liquidity in the global economy, active engagement of private sector creditors, and combatting illicit financial flows in accordance with the 2030 Agenda.

58. Instead of the fragmented, sector to sector, approach, the Deputy Secretary-General counselled the international community to adopt a holistic, systemic, approach, as proposed in the United Nations framework for immediate socioeconomic response to COVID-19. Moreover, she intimated the High-Level Meeting about the United Nations' efforts at supporting the recovery efforts of the Member States through a multidimensional approach. A salient feature of the UN collaboration with Member States is the provision of evidence-based policy advice. According to the Deputy Secretary General, the UN's response was not limited to the capitals, but extended to populations and communities in cities and outlying villages.

59. The Deputy Secretary-General cited recent estimates which show that COVID-19 could push between 71 to 100 million people into extreme poverty by 2020. This represents the first upsurge in extreme poverty since 1998. She remarked that this would wipe out the poverty eradication gains achieved since 2017. A large share of the new extreme poor would be concentrated in countries that are already struggling with high poverty rates. Almost half of the new poor would be concentrated in South Asia and a third in Africa. At the same time, hard won development gains in LDCs risk being reversed.

60. The Deputy Secretary-General drew attention to the inequalities between social groups, including inequalities based on age, gender, race, ethnicity, migrant status and disability. She recalled that the international community had responded with support measures such as debt relief, strengthening social sectors and providing social safety nets for the most vulnerable. Maintaining this momentum while redoubling coordination efforts remains vital as the world moves towards recovery.

61. The Deputy Secretary-General called for a reset of socio-economic policies in order to build back better, investing in universal healthcare, education, social protection, equitable access to digital technology and connectivity and support for micro- and medium- sized enterprises. She stated that, to ensure that recovery efforts are aligned to the SDGs, the UN is playing an active role in facilitating discussions on financing for sustainable development. She disclosed that to hasten the recovery process, the UN advocates enhancing external financing for inclusive growth, gender equality and decent work.

62. In his own contribution, the Director-General of the ILO, Mr. Guy Ryder, observed that even before COVID-19 struck, young people were two to three times more likely to be unemployed than their elderly counterparts. In numerical terms, this translated into 68 million people that were unemployed during the pre-COVID19 period. Mr. Ryder presented the data on global distribution of a category termed NEEDS, meaning the percentage of young people in various regions who are neither in employment, nor undergoing education or training programmes that would render them employable:

Arab world:	34 percent <sup>1</sup>
Asia Pacific region	24 percent
Africa	20 percent
Americas	19 percent
Europe and Central Asia	14.5 percent

63. Based on these figures, the ILO Director-General surmised that the 2030 Agenda's target to reduce the percentage of those in the NEEDS category by 8.6 was unlikely to be met. According to him, roughly 75 percent of young people work in the informal sector and lack access to any form of protection. In plain figures, 126 million young people workers are yet to be liberated from the claws of poverty. COVID-19 has further compounded the youth employment woes. According to the ILO Director-General 1/6 of the persons below the age of 28 years were thrown out of jobs when the pandemic hit the world. At the same time, the pandemic disrupted education and training plans. The upshot of all these is the increasing proportion of young people that are subject to mental health stresses and depression.

64. The ILO Director-General exhaustively discussed the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on youth unemployment globally. He observed that that even before the onset of the pandemic, youth unemployment rates were already very high. This was also the case with the number of youths not undergoing benefiting from job-related

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<sup>1</sup> The percentages presented here are relative to each region, and not to the entire world.

training or education programmes. The pandemic has since aggravated the situation. Bringing down youth unemployment rates would be an uphill task considering the devastating impact of the public health calamity. The pandemic has clearly thrown many youths out of jobs, especially, those working in the informal sector.

65. Mr. Ryder referred to ILO's latest estimates of the COVID19-prompted job losses, particularly, the 400 million full-time jobs were lost in the first 6 months of 2020. He also informed the High-Level Meeting about the outcome of the Global Youth Employment Forum 2019 which took place in Abuja, Nigeria, in August 2019. The Forum, among other things focused on measures aimed at coping with the impact of the pandemic on youth unemployment.

66. The ILO Director-General recommended that all available instruments be applied to minimize the impact of the pandemic and safeguard the interest of the youth otherwise referred to as "the lockdown generation". Among the measures highlighted in the presentation are the application of fiscal and monetary tools in support of small and medium-scale enterprises, the formulation of policies targeted at job and income retention, the establishment and strengthening of social protection schemes, and the engagement of workers in dialogues on poverty eradication. Finally, the ILO fully aligned itself with the philosophy underpinning, and the objectives of, the Alliance of Poverty Eradication.

Mr. Qu Dongyu, Food and Agriculture Organization/FAO

67. The Director General of Food and Agriculture organization of the United Nations (FAO) Mr. Qu Dongyu, reminded the High-Level Meeting that the world was only a decade away from the year 2030, with multiple challenges on the horizon: 740 million people living on less than \$1.90 a day; escalating civil conflict; climate change, and the world's gloomy economic growth outlook. He alluded to a World Bank forecast of 5.2 percent contraction in the global economy and stated that COVID-19 has further complicated the situation. This sobering forecast and associated realities together threaten to push an additional 100 million people into the poverty trap. The FAO Director-General underlined the interlinkages between poverty eradication (SDG-1) and Zero Hunger (SDG-2), contending that agriculture, food systems and rural development need to be at the center of national development agendas. He placed special emphasis on investment in rural capital.

68. The FAO Director-General estimated that 80 percent of the world's poor live in rural areas, where agriculture is the mainstay of the population. Evidence shows that investing in agriculture has the highest potential to eradicate poverty and transform the world's food systems, making them more inclusive. The Director General also highlighted the risks that COVID-19 poses to rural areas, farmers and seasonal workers. He added that the pandemic triggered economic and supply chain disruptions and this has caused a disproportionate impact on women and smallholder farmers. To lessen the risks, the FAO Director-General highlighted the need to scale up social protection and strengthen rural institutions.

69. The DG also gave an overview of FAO's Hand in Hand initiative, launched in 2019. The aim of the initiative is to reposition the agriculture sector for the challenges of poverty reduction and mitigation of hunger through targeted investments in human capital. Elaborating other FAO initiatives on poverty eradication, he mentioned the Rural Extreme Poverty, which was launched last year; the newly established FAO Office for Small Island Developing States, Least Developed and Landlocked Developing States; and the recently created Office of Innovation.

*Dr. Mukhisa Kituyi, Secretary-General, UNCTAD*

70. Mr. Mukhisa Kituyi, Secretary-General of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), noted that sustained poverty reduction observed over the last thirty years was driven by an export-driven growth model. That model has, according to Mr. Kituyi, now been rendered obsolete by the COVID-19 pandemic. He noted development had made it necessary for policy makers in developing countries to find innovative development and poverty eradication pathways.

71. Mr. Kituyi added that the global health emergency represents not merely a bump along the road to continued poverty reduction, but a fundamental change. He advocated for the need to reflect and reassess policy options in the revitalization of the productive capacity of economies, and in the eradication of poverty worldwide.

72. Focusing on UNCTAD, Mr. Kituyi underscored that the main mandate of the organization was (and still is) to achieve gainful integration of developing countries into the world economy. He added that, with borders closing, supply chains shortening and economic nationalism on the rise, policy options are becoming limited. This warrants out-of-the-box reflections to solutions to new and complex challenges.

73. The UNCTAD Secretary-General stressed the need to reflect on the progress so far achieved over the past thirty years, and on emerging challenges. In the last thirty years, extreme poverty was reduced to half of what it used to be globally. That progress was largely led by Asia, meaning, it was not even. As a result, progress towards higher living standards was stalled for many countries. For example, even before the COVID-19 pandemic, the number of people living in extreme poverty had risen in several sub-Saharan African countries as well as in parts of Latin America, the Caribbean and Western Asia.

74. Meeting the poverty eradication target of the 2030 Agenda thus requires improving the economic performance of African countries (which together constitute the majority of Least Developed Countries/LDCs). It is, therefore, worrying that even before COVID struck, the persistent output losses and steep decline in commodity prices between 2014 and 2016 conspired to militate against poverty reduction efforts in Africa. Instead of growing, African economies have experienced a decade of near stagnation in per capita income. At the global level, average real incomes in 2019 were lower than in 2014 in one-third of commodity-dependent developing countries – home to 870 million people.

75. Mr. Kituyi turned his attention to COVID-19's negative impact on the developing world's economic prospects. Even before the health impact fully materialized, the public health crisis had set back ongoing poverty reduction efforts. The UNCTAD Secretary-General estimated that approximately 140 million persons would fall into poverty in 2020 due to the lockdown policies and other restrictions dictated by the pandemic. Of this number, Africa will account for more than half (57 percent) of the increase in global poor.

76. Mr. Kituyi added that the COVID-19 crisis was only accelerating the realignment of global production towards shorter, more regional, more intangible, and less low-skilled labor-intensive value chains. These developments will place greater obstacles to the realization of the developing countries' economic growth and the concomitant poverty reduction objectives. The onus for the reduction of poverty within its neighborhood will now rest on Africa. The continent and the LDCs will, more than at any other time, require broader strategies to alleviate the suffering of the poor and destitute. As the UNCTAD Secretary-General saw the situation, there is no magic bullet for meeting the new post-COVID-19 poverty challenge: it will take determined and holistic efforts in each country to overcome the challenge. Cooperation with all partners is also a condition for success.

77. From UNCTAD's perspective, the post-COVID-19 poverty eradication efforts should focus on developing *productive* capacities and transforming production and

export structures. Developing productive capacities further entails instituting measures targeted at capital accumulation, structural change and technological progress. It requires enhancing the *productivity and international competitiveness of domestic firms to enhance their survival and growth rates*. However, in Africa and the LDCs most workers are in low-productivity and low-wage jobs, mostly in agriculture and services. Therefore, there is an urgent need to transform the structure of these economies and to reallocate resources from low to high productivity activities, like manufacturing and high value-adding services.

78. In this regard, Mr. Kituyi mentioned that UNCTAD developed a Productive Capacities Index (PCI) to assist member States in monitoring and benchmarking their productive capacities. This index looks at eight core drivers: Energy, Human Capital, Information and Communications Technology, Institutions, Natural Capital, Private Sector, Structural Change and Transport.

79. The Secretary-General of UNCTAD concluded by informing that the index will be launched this year and has been finetuned through several seminars and workshops in Botswana, Lao PDR, Namibia, and Rwanda. He concluded by expressing the hope the index would serve as a potent tool for identifying the critical pathways needed to enhance productive capacities for sustained poverty eradication.

*Ms. Alicia Barcena Ibarra, Executive Secretary, ECLAC*

80. The Executive Secretary and UN Under-Secretary General, Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, Ms. Alicia Barcena Ibarra, stated that challenges associated with poverty eradication in the Latin American region are both multidimensional and persistent. She described the Latin American region as the most unequal in the world in terms of income distribution, with an average gini coefficient of 0.46 in 2019<sup>2</sup>. The region is also unequal on wealth with a gini index of 0.8 and is beset by racial, ethnic and territorial inequalities in its various life cycles. In a nutshell, many are being left behind. Cultural privileges that favour the elites are historical with more than half of workers (54 percent) in the informal sector, mostly women.

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<sup>2</sup> Gini co-efficient is a formula that measures the dispersal of incomes on a scale of zero to 1, where zero stands for everyone having the same income or no one having more than any other, and 1 means only one person has all the income.

81. The Executive Secretary expressed concern over the Latin American region's plight in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic. She noted the pandemic's dramatic impact on the health, economic and social sectors. The pandemic, according to her, threatened to reverse the poverty eradication gains that the region recorded decades earlier. She recalled that the region had made significant progress between 2002 and 2014, placing approximately 66 million people above the poverty line. This success was made possible by effective political leadership, job creation, and globalization.

82. Ms. Bárcena cited estimates indicating the likelihood of Latin America's poverty figures rising by at least around 30 million more people in 2020. This would bring the total number of people living in poverty to 215 million (or 34.7 percent of the region's population). Extreme poverty is likely to increase by 15.9 million, affecting a total of 83.4 million. Based on a preliminary estimate, a drop of between -5.3 and -8.5% in GDP growth rate would translate into a mere 3.4 percent GDP growth, and render approximately 40 million persons jobless.

83. Latin American and Caribbean countries have responded to the crisis by implementing social protection measures to compensate for the loss of incomes to informal workers and other vulnerable population groups. The main measures implemented are cash and in-kind transfers, which so far amount to some US\$42 billion, representing approximately 0.8 percent of regional GDP.

84. Among measures that the ECLAC Executive Secretary recommended to cushion vulnerable groups against the impact of COVID-19 are:

- (a) Payment of basic emergency income of \$140 per month, for 6 months, to all persons trapped in extreme poverty (the cost, as projected by ECLAC, would be 2.1 percent of GDP);
- (b) Delivery of hunger coupons or bonds equivalent to \$50 per month to those deemed poor but who had not yet fallen into extreme poverty (the estimated cost of the policy option, according to ECLAC, was 0.45% of GDP);
- (c) Commitment to rescue or bail out SMEs and strategic enterprises, on condition that they retain their employees;
- (d) Expanded liquidity and financial access to the middle-income countries of the region;
- (e) Universal access to welfare, which would entail gradual strengthening of social protection to ensure that none is left behind;
- (f) Redirection of investment to productive ends or enterprises; and

(g) Tackling corruption, while building trust in public institutions.

*Mr Mourad Wahba, Associate Administrator, UNDP*

85. The Associate Administrator of the UNDP, Mr. Mourad Wahba, affirmed that poverty is not simply about income. It is a multidimensional phenomenon, with several attributes and variables. He stated that about 1.3 billion people across 101 countries fall under the multidimensional poverty category. Two-thirds of this number live in middle-income countries. He further stated that since the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, the UNDP had carried out socio-economic analysis of 68 countries, based on which it is estimated that the human development gains achieved during the last 6 years will be wiped out in the first six months of 2020.

86. Mr. Wahba drew the Meeting's attention to 5 (five) conclusions that emerged from UNDP's country assessments of the impact of COVID-19. First, country context matters in evaluating the impact of this, as indeed, any, pandemic. Although the economic impact of COVID-19 will be felt across the world, the magnitude of impact will vary from country to country, depending on the underlying economic, governance and demographic structures. In the current circumstances, we may expect a significant dip in funding for social programmes targeted at poverty reduction.

87. Second, socio-economic assessment of country performance is crucial in identifying blind spots, and focusing on disaggregated data, that is, data on vulnerable populations and demographic categories in need of assistance. The UNDP assessments have been largely instrumental in identifying blind spots, that is, data scarcity, or data gaps occasioned by inability to collect data in real-time. Reliable data would help the UNDP to identify marginalized and vulnerable groups more accurately. For instance, the disaggregated data from recent assessments reveal that the pandemic had accentuated gender-based violence, a matter of great concern.

88. Third, in many countries, the social contract between the state and the citizens has been seriously eroded. The erosion manifests in many ways, notably, as impaired access to justice and as weak judicial institutions, human rights violations, inadequate



or plain lack of social protection, and declining citizen trust in government and in government institutions.

89. Fourth, there is need to invest in green economies, including nature-based solutions. We need to build back better and greener, promoting nature-based solutions as part of a new social safety net for the world.

90. Fifth, it is necessary to invest in digital technology. Investments in innovation and ICT are needed to close the digital gap in low and middle-income countries. This requires an investment of around \$100 billion.

91. Mr. Wahba concluded his presentation by assuring the PGA's poverty eradication initiatives and the Alliance for Poverty Eradication of UNDP's full support.

*Ms. Laura Jaitman, World Bank Special Representative*

92. The World Bank Special Representative to the United Nations Headquarters and Head of the World Bank Office in New York, Ms. Laura Jaitman, echoed earlier reports that 70 to 100 million people will be pushed into extreme poverty in 2020. She noted that many sources of funding, such as remittances, have been affected. She predicted currency depreciation and a further decrease in remittances to low- and middle-income countries by about 20 percent in 2020. She called on developed countries to assist developing countries to meet their financing obligations.

93. On financing poverty eradication, the World Bank Representative stated that her organization contributed immensely to the poverty eradication component of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). In fact, poverty eradication remains an important aspect of the World Bank's work under the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

94. The outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, along with a projected contraction of 5.2 percent of the global economy in 2020, has, regrettably, changed the trajectory of the World Bank's fight against poverty. The World Bank Representative noted that the post-COVID-19 economic downturn is the first major contraction of the global economy since the first World War. The shrinkage is likely to slow down the recovery process. Going further, she stated that the global economy lost about \$12.2 trillion -

the equivalent of the economy of the entire South Asia. This loss greatly impacted the World Bank's poverty eradication efforts with severe implications for financing.

95. Explaining further, the World Bank Representative expected the pandemic to impact negatively not only on external development assistance and foreign direct investment but also on domestic resource mobilization and revenue generation efforts. Much of the capital that should have been invested was withheld as investors pondered the risks associated with the unfolding situation. The upshot was reduced finance outflows from developed to developing countries. In the case of some developing countries the losses reached 20 percent, with women and young people bearing the brunt of the hostile change. As a cumulative effect, stakeholders are backtracking on poverty eradication which is resulting in new levels of poverty.

96. The World Bank Representative placed emphasis on partnerships in the fight against poverty. As a matter of fact, partnership for poverty eradication was, as she noted, in line with the Bank's mandate. She informed the Meeting about the World Bank's plan to earmark \$160 billion from June 2021, for poverty eradication, particularly in low-income countries. This fund will be distributed on concessional terms and will be allocated to the private sector and small and medium enterprises.

97. The World Bank representative emphasized that partnerships are key to recovery. It is in this respect that her institution insists on partnering with United Nations Agencies like the World Food program. The World Bank is also looking forward to continuing in her engagements with the UN.

98. In conclusion, Ms. Jaitman recommended the following key areas of intervention in order to address poverty eradication in the new reality:

- (i) Attention should be focused on threats to economic development either at the global or national level.
- (ii) Governments and all stakeholders must remain committed to the establishment and operation of *sustainable institutions*.

### **Intervention by the Moderator**

99. The Moderator and Under Secretary-General for Global Communications, Ms. Melissa Fleming, asked the CEPAL Executive Secretary, Alicia Barcena, if any state government had bought into her proposal for basic emergency income and hunger coupons. Ms. Barcena replied that some governments had done so for about two months, but she would prefer that the relief programme be extended for a longer

time, say 6 months. For hunger coupons, Ms. Barcena stated that she had implemented it in liaison with the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) but that she is now reaching out to Ministers of Agriculture for its implementation.

100. Ms. Fleming also asked Mr. Mourad Wahba, UNDP Associate Administrator how he could make a strong business case for green recovery in the context of the Alliance for Poverty Alleviation. Mr. Wahba, in response, called for increased reliance on distance learning and internet-based solutions; a shift of focus away from nature-based solutions; and movement away from carbon-based solutions to renewable resources.

101. The USG further asked the FAO Director-General, Dongyu Qu, if there was any indication of hope for building back better on the issue of hunger. Mr. Qu was positive and affirmative but urged more access to modern technology for developing countries. He expressed happiness that the World Bank was committed to providing medium and long-term responses in this regard. He, however, stressed the need for scaled up investments by the private sector, civil society and international financial institutions.

**Interactive Session**  
**(Member States, Regional Groups and Observers)**

*Goodwill Message by Mr. Naci Ağbal, President of Strategy and Budget, Presidency of the Republic of Turkey*

102. Before the commencement of the interactive segment, the High-Level Meeting participants listened to a goodwill message from Mr. Naci Ağbal, President of Strategy and Budget in the Presidency of the Republic of Turkey. The main conclusions in Mr. Ağbal's message are: (i) the world is on the edge of an enormous transformation; (ii) the success of efforts at the eradication of poverty hinges on international cooperation and solidarity; and (iii) Social protection programmes to cater for the needs of the population should be scaled up and implemented.

103. On Turkey's specific experience in responding to the global pandemic, Mr. Ağbal stated that both the public and the private sector had, for decades, invested in healthcare. Besides, healthcare services, including testing and distribution of kits, are made available free for all persons, including refugees living in Turkey. Following the outbreak of COVID-19, the country built two emergency hospitals with over 1000 beds and 400 intensive care units. It further launched a social protection programme to cater to citizens' urgent needs during the pandemic.

104. Mr. Ağbal added that the programme provides short-term loans and other employee benefits to more than six million households. Taxes, social security premium and loan repayments due from many small- and medium-scale enterprises were deferred. Turkey further responded to the emergency relief needs of more than 130 countries. The country has also been providing facilities such as personal protection equipment and made-in-Turkey ventilators.

## Statements by Regional Groups

### *G77 and China*

105. The Permanent Representative of Guyana, H.E. Mr. Rudolph Michael Ten-Pow, speaking on behalf of the G77 and China, observed that the COVID-19 pandemic continues to cause devastation and suffering around the world, while hunger and malnutrition are at an unprecedented scale. Sixty million more people are being pushed into extreme poverty and up to half of the global workforce of 1.6 billion people are without means of livelihood. Global output has shrunk by \$8.5 trillion, representing the sharpest contraction since the great depression of the 1930s.

106. The G77 Chair also observed that progress in global poverty reduction has stagnated due to the current global health crisis. The situation has been compounded by economic slowdown, conflicts, and climate change. He predicted that over the long-term, developing countries would be the hardest hit due to the fragility of health systems, limited social protection coverage and vulnerability to external shocks. Those left behind, such as disadvantaged groups, are becoming increasingly hard to reach. He equally expressed the G77 and China's concern over the volatility of global financial markets, with over \$100 billion in capital flight from emerging markets since the pandemic. He described this as the largest outflow ever recorded.

107. Ambassador Ten-Pow reckoned that the current pandemic was derailing efforts of developing countries to implement the Sustainable Development agenda and, at the same time, undermining the poverty eradication gains made in recent years. He reiterated the Group's call to strengthen international cooperation, solidarity and resource mobilization, including the commitments earlier made by developed countries. He added that measures must be taken to address the root causes such as climate change, poverty, hunger and malnutrition.

108. The G77 Chair stated that the pandemic must be treated as an opportunity to rethink current approaches and strategies for the decade of action. Eradication of extreme poverty requires investing in policies that are aligned with the 2030 Agenda, the Addis Ababa Action Agenda and the Paris Agreement. He underscored the

importance of economic diversification, increased investments and financing in all sectors that are critical to accelerating the implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

109. He also called for urgent efforts to bridge the digital divide by accelerating the transfer of technologies, especially, technologies that are essential for implementing a wide range of SDGs. The technology transfer should, he added, be undertaken on concessional and preferential terms. In conclusion, Ambassador Ten-Pow assured that the G77 looks forward to further dialogues and colloquia on the subject.

### *The European Union (EU)*

110. Speaking on behalf of the EU, H.E. Ambassador Silvio Gonzato assured the High-Level Meeting that eradicating poverty and discrimination was at the heart of the EU development cooperation framework. He described poverty as a multidimensional challenge with economic, social, cultural, political and environmental connotations. Tackling it from all sides requires the adoption of a cross-sectoral approach, that is, action on all fronts, including education, health, social protection, gender equality, nutrition and strengthening resilience.

111. The E.U Ambassador emphasized that poverty eradication must go hand in hand with a special focus on the poorest and the most vulnerable countries and sections of society. To help achieve this, he revealed that the EU is committed to allocate at least 20 percent of its Official Development Assistance (ODA) to social inclusion and human development. He assured that given projections on extreme poverty, the EU and its Member States have continued to strengthen action to address needs in least developed countries, sub-Saharan Africa and fragile and conflict-affected areas.

112. Mr. Gonzato further stated that the EU and its Member States had addressed, in a coherent and comprehensive manner, the links between and among various challenges, especially, poverty and conflict, fragility and forced displacement. It is this holistic approach which enables the EU to integrate actions covering human rights, insecurity, education in crisis, the rule of law, good governance, climate change, peace and security. He stressed that building resilience to shocks and increasing social

protection coverage are essential to development strategies for ending extreme poverty.

113. Ambassador Gonzato noted that the COVID-19 pandemic amply demonstrates the relevance of effective health and social security systems. He asserted that the EU is the world's leading donor in the field of development cooperation, and that collective ODA from the EU and its Member States amounted to \$75.2 billion in 2019, representing 55.2 percent of global assistance. He disclosed that the EU disbursed about 18 percent of its ODA in 2018 through budget support, involving direct financial transfers to national treasuries of partner countries, with the transfers aligned to the countries' own development policies, priorities and systems. He stated that most of the beneficiaries achieved strong gains in reducing extreme poverty.

114. The EU Ambassador explained that EU's new approach to addressing poverty will now integrate the major disruptive impact of the covid-19 pandemic on EU partner countries and create a link with recovery action. This way, it would deliver on the build back better principle which links recovery with the implementation of the 2030 agenda and the SDGs. He detailed EU's proven capacity to mobilize development fund and assistance, and its willingness to use them to assist developing countries in Africa and other regions.

#### *LLDCs (Kazakhstan)*

115. Speaking on behalf of the LLDCs, Kazakhstan declared its intention to work closely with the newly inaugurated Alliance for Poverty Eradication. It noted that the population of LLDCs of over 500 million remains vulnerable due largely to lack of access to the sea and remoteness from international markets. Before the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, almost 30 percent of the population in LLDCs lived below the poverty line. The pandemic is now pushing much more people into extreme poverty, eroding years of progress in the attainment of SDG 1.

Against the background in which the LLDCs find themselves, Kazakhstan proposed the adoption of the following measures:

- (a) international support to increase the LLDCs' trade potential and expand their export opportunities;
- (b) support to enhance the LLDCs' industrial capacity and promote structural economic transformation;

- (c) support to strengthen the LLDCs' medium and small scale enterprises and to establish effective social protection systems;
- (d) heightened awareness of the consequences of climate change and institution of remedial measures;
- (e) strengthening of partnerships to implement the Vienna Programme of Action.

Statements by Member States

116. The Spanish State Secretary for International Cooperation, H.E., Angeles Moreno Bau, described poverty eradication as a global challenge experienced by humanity. She called for an effective approach to end its scourge across the globe. She noted that income-related poverty plays a very significant role in exacerbating the challenge, hence the recent decision by the Spanish government to introduce minimum living income. This measure lifted 1.5 million people, 30 percent of whom are below 18 years, out of poverty.

117. The State Secretary averred that, due to its complicated nature, poverty must be assessed and addressed using multidimensional and comprehensive approaches. She underscored the UNDP's approach to poverty eradication, which focuses on all aspects of human endeavor and called on all stakeholders to make the right steps.

118. In his statement on behalf of Nicaragua, H.E. Dr. Paul Oquist Kelley, Minister-Private Secretary for National Policies of the President of the Republic of Nicaragua, highlighted the poverty eradication measures adopted by his government, among them, the policies on insurance and social security, and the provision of subsidies to poor households to mitigate the impact of poverty. The Minister noted that poverty requires collective efforts by the international community to be eradicated. He traced the historical antecedents to major economic depressions from the early 20<sup>th</sup> century to the present day. He decried the magnitude of the problem today, especially against the outbreak of COVID-19.

119. On Nicaragua's response to the COVID-19 epidemic and its attendant consequences, the Minister informed the Meeting that the government had put together a multi-million-dollar package, which was expected to enable the country to make up for recent poverty eradication losses while increasing the gains. He recalled that since 2015, the poverty rate in Nicaragua had been declining due to deliberate government policies aimed at uplifting the living standards of the people.



120. Turning his attention to the global environment, the Nicaraguan Minister called on the international community to exhort strong countries to stop taking unilateral actions on major economic issues affecting the whole world. He opined that such measures need to take into consideration the interests of all countries. Secondly, he called for debt forgiveness as a way of avoiding a prolonged debt crisis and enabling developing countries to make significant leaps in poverty eradication.

121. The Permanent Representative of China, H.E. Mr. Zhang Jun, endorsed the view that the COVID-19 pandemic was causing severe challenges to poverty eradication. The challenges need to be addressed as the international community prepare for the commemoration of the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the founding of the United Nations and the onset of the decade for action and delivery on the sustainable development goals. He called for the prioritization of development in tackling poverty. He stated that China formulates policies for development and poverty reduction based on prevailing national conditions. He referred to China's strategy of promoting synergies between policies, communities and markets in addressing poverty. He stressed that China also puts people first and that in 2020, China is on course to lift all of its rural poor from poverty to achieve the targets set in the 2030 agenda.

122. The Chinese Permanent Representative called on the international community to firmly uphold multilateralism and jointly tackle the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic. To promote inclusive and sustainable growth, he stressed the need to scale up cooperation in the areas of capacity building, the development of the digital economy, clean energy, 5G and other new business areas. He disclosed that China pledged to provide \$2 billion as international assistance within two years and, under the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC), to cancel Chinese government loans to African countries due to mature in 2020.

123. Many other states made brief interventions during the meeting. Algeria outlined some elements of its national strategy for poverty eradication such as provision of microcredit, social protection and compulsory social insurance coverage. Qatar had similar provisions, especially for increased humanitarian aid; while Morocco mentioned its national initiative for human development; the Green Morocco plan, as well as its social protection and medical coverage programmes.

124. Nepal stressed the need for political will to end extreme poverty. Guatemala mentioned the disproportionate effect of the COVID-19 pandemic on women and girls and on countries in fragile situations. In their own contributions, Cuba and Namibia recalled their national experiences in fighting poverty, with emphasis on child nutrition in Cuba and Namibia's allusion to late Kofi Annan's maxim that "extreme poverty anywhere is a threat to security everywhere." Peru and Zimbabwe stressed the importance of a global response to fight COVID-19.

125. France highlighted its efforts such as emergency aid and debt relief to assist developing countries overcome poverty. Sri Lanka emphasized the benefits of long-term strategies in addressing the causes of poverty.

126. Uruguay noted that, in the last 15 years, it achieved noticeable progress in the eradication of extreme poverty, boasting the largest middle class in Latin America, which represents more than 60 percent of its population. Uruguay is also in the top categories of countries in the region with positive human well-being indices. The country expressed its readiness to share its good practices with others. It looked forward to future engagements of the Alliance for Poverty Eradication.

*Summary of Statements Received from Member States After the Meeting*

127. In its own statement, India pointed to the devastating impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the global economy. It observed that the steep recession triggered by the pandemic posed serious threats to the attainment of the key targets of Agenda 2030. It therefore called for the implementation of policies aimed at cushioning the consequences, protecting vulnerable populations, and improving national capacity to anticipate and respond to similar challenges in the future.

128. India informed the HLM that it was implementing a comprehensive development strategy to end poverty in all its forms. The key components of the poverty eradication policy are accelerated economic growth and development, focus on vulnerable groups and their needs, sustained attention to the needs of women and children, and implementation of broader social safety nets. Meanwhile, India had designed varieties of programmes to promote gainful employment, and improve access to basic services, such as health, nutrition, sanitation, education, skills, and clean fuel.

129. The statement further drew the Meeting's attention to India's National Rural Employment Guarantee Act which provides a legal guarantee of 100 days of wage

employment per household in a year. No less than 54 percent of the beneficiaries of the employee guarantee scheme are women. Furthermore, the application ICT has enabled India to achieve universal financial inclusion. By linking people's banking accounts with their identification numbers and mobile phones, India had succeeded in bringing over 393 million people into the mainstream financial system. India has also made strides in the areas of universal health coverage, nutrition, housing, sanitation, agriculture and gainful employment.

130. India's various efforts aimed at poverty alleviation programs between 2006-2016, has moved over 271 million people out of poverty, recording the fastest reductions in the multidimensional poverty index globally as captured by UNDP.

131. Ecuador is of the opinion that the ending poverty requires conditions that go beyond income, such as inequalities, exclusion and access to services. In short, it demands considering sustainable development in its dimensions. It therefore called on the UN System to regularly rely on indicators of multidimensional poverty, and the need for international financial institutions to increase the availability of financial resources and capacity building, as well as debt relief and greater flexibility.

132. Bhutan remarked that the magnitude of COVID-19 already brought countries to their knees. It notes that the pandemic threatens to erase any modicum of progress achieved by countries that were on track to graduate from the LDC status. Focusing on the country's experience with Gross National Happiness, Bhutan stated that conditions such as environmental resilience, community vitality, culture, and time use, are integral components of poverty eradication. Assessment of progress in poverty eradication should go beyond economic metrics and include psychological wellbeing and other dimensions of human existence.

133. Russia believes that poverty eradication is the greatest global challenge, a challenge that had been further exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic looked set to derail efforts at attaining the Sustainable Development Goals. Russia therefore called for decisive action to forestall this scenario, and to ensure that poverty is effectively tackled before it jeopardized the achievement of all internationally agreed development goals. This requires the introduction of measures to end hunger, expand universal health coverage, promote access to education, and engineer economic growth.

134. Russia also highlighted the importance of poverty alleviation in rural areas, since nearly 80 percent of the world's people living in extreme poverty are located in rural areas. It called for coordinated efforts to build sustainable agriculture and food

systems, and bridging the gap between urban and rural areas in terms of income and social infrastructure.

135. In its own statement, Philippines welcomes any measure aimed at accelerating the attainment of SDG1, especially on the onset of the pandemic, which had had more negative impact on development activities in the first half of 2020 than anticipated. Prior to the pandemic, the country was able to reduce poverty by 6.6 (from 27.6 to 21) percentage points between 2015 and 2018, and was on track in halving national income poverty by 2030 but these gains have been confronted by serious risks.

136. According to the Philippines National Economic Development Authority, increasing the access to and expediting the delivery of social services to the most vulnerable groups, poor, women, persons with disabilities, older persons, children, indigenous peoples, among others are the biggest challenges in implementing social protection programmes under the new normal. The country therefore called for more emergency-responsive policies and social insurance systems, enhanced and immediate assistance to older persons as well as food, cash, and other forms of assistance to middle-class earners in periods of prolonged lockdowns, which affect their earning ability.

137. The statement described that Philippines Philippine Program for Recovery with Equity and Solidarity or PH-PROGRESO, a four-pillar strategy formulated in response to the pandemic, and providing funding allocation equivalent to 9.1 percent of the country's GDP. The first pillar is on Emergency Support for Vulnerable Groups and Individuals; the second is on Mobilizing Resources to Fight COVID-19; the third is on Fiscal and Monetary Actions and the fourth pillar is on an Economic Recovery Plan.

138. In its statement, Indonesia informed the Meeting that it managed to reduce the poverty rate for the first time to a single digit in 2018 and to narrow the inequality gap. However, the pandemic had reversed the gains. The government therefore allocated around USD 48.5 billion to manage COVID-19 and to mitigate its impact. The specific measures it adopted included strengthening health service, social protection, and the provision of economic stimulus to assist Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprise (MSMEs) and other business enterprises. The incentives focus, among others, on helping the Indonesians cope with cash flow and financial liquidity problems, and ensuring employment.

139. To tackle the pandemic and the resultant devastating effects on the economy, Indonesia recommended that countries need to ensure access and affordable

medicines, therapies and vaccines, whenever available. Other recommended measures are keeping trade and business enterprises open, maintaining supply chains; and ensuring that financial supports are available, including for social protection.

140. In its statement, Japan informed that persistent poverty, epidemics and economic downturns impose great hardships on individuals and undermine prospects for peace, stability, and sustainable development. It further informed that the country is committed to eradicating poverty, especially from the view of promoting human security. In this regard, Japan has been leading the promotion of universal health coverage (UHC) internationally, contributing to health sectors both bilaterally and multilaterally through capacity building and health system strengthening.

141. In response to the UN Secretary-General's appeal for humanitarian assistance, the Government of Japan decided to provide more than 1.5 billion USD to countries with weak health systems. This assistance will enhance the capacity of the health and medical sectors and provide necessary materials in order to slow the spread of COVID-19 and promote preventive measures in countries worldwide.

142. Japan also informed that it will continue to focus on promoting development cooperation through public-private partnerships and partnerships with local governments, utilizing the resources of the private sector and promoting private-led growth in order to support economic development of developing countries more vigorously and effectively. Considering the multifaceted nature of poverty and the negative impact it poses on human security, Japan will also continue to be committed to the eradication of poverty through diverse approaches focusing on health and Universal Health Coverage, environmental issues including climate change, education and Information, Communication and Technology (ICT), and thus contributing to the achievement of the SDGs.

## Closing Segment

143. In his closing remarks, the President of the General Assembly thanked Member States and development partners for supporting his initiatives on poverty eradication. He expressed his deepest appreciation to the founding members of the Alliance for Poverty Eradication, noting that their decision to join the Alliance signaled their intention not only to give practical expression to the internationally agreed Sustainable Development Goals but also to stand in solidarity with the destitute and poor communities of the world. He also thanked Member States that were weighing the option of joining.

144. The PGA further expressed the gratitude of his Office to the eminent line-up of speakers at the High-Level Meeting. He referred in particular to President Muhammadu Buhari of Nigeria, the Secretary-General of the UN, the President of ECOSOC, the Honourable Ministers from Pakistan, Turkey and Nicaragua, the Special Rapporteur on Extreme Poverty and Human Rights, the Moderator and the Panelists at the Panel Discussions' segment, and the Member States' representatives.

145. He noted that the High-Level Meeting addressed the main challenges in poverty eradication, prior to canvassing pragmatic options and strategies, as well as the methods to apply to align the strategies with medium-term plans. In his own words,

*“Taken together, the interventions at various segments of this High-Level Meeting have enhanced our understanding of the challenges in, and opportunities for, poverty eradication. I am therefore confident that by the time that the report of today’s event is circulated, our knowledge of what constitute good practices in poverty eradication would have increased. At the very least, the High-Level Meeting has pinned poverty down as a hydra-headed monster, a monster that can only be attacked and defeated with a multi-pronged and well-coordinated strategy.”*

146. The PGA highlighted the havoc wrought by COVID-19. He observed that the pandemic had aggravated the challenge of poverty eradication and opened the world’s eyes to the risks of similar disruptions in the future. The pandemic, he reckoned, would impact heavily on the capacities of least developed countries to eradicate poverty without external assistance. He, therefore, hoped that the spirit of international cooperation which underpinned the establishment of the United Nations would also influence the choices of Member States in matters pertaining to poverty eradication, worldwide.

147. Before declaring the High-Level Meeting closed, the PGA urged the newly inaugurated Alliance for Poverty Eradication to serve as the leading voice on poverty eradication, and to continue raising awareness about the necessity for multilateral cooperation on the matter. He called on the Alliance to continuously see and project poverty eradication as the first critical step towards promoting international peace and security, enthrone the rule of law, and advancing the cause of human rights and good governance.

## **Synopsis of Emerging Issues, Conclusions and Recommendations**

### **148. Emerging Issues: Alliance for Poverty Eradication**

- The timeliness of the inauguration of the Alliance for Poverty Eradication (especially, in view of the devastating impact of COVID-19, and the resultant reversal of poverty eradication gains);
- The role of the newly launched Alliance in promoting dialogue on, and sharing knowledge of international good practices in, poverty eradication;
- The need for the Alliance to collaborate with the pen-holders on the organization of the next International Day for Poverty Eradication on 17<sup>th</sup> October 2020;
- The need to institutionalize and sustain the High-Level Meeting as the first in the annual series of Colloquia or Policy Dialogues on Poverty Eradication;
- The necessity to admit the private sector, civil society and other stakeholders as members of the Alliance for Poverty Eradication;
- The preparation of a Roadmap to guide the Alliance's medium- to long-term activities; and
- The role of the UNDP in providing institutional anchor/back up for the Alliance's activities.

### **149. Challenges in Poverty Eradication: HLM's conclusions**

- Poverty is the most formidable obstacle to the attainment of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs);
- Poverty is a major factor in expectant mothers' stress and is the leading cause of pre- and post-natal complications;
- Conflict and civil strife will not last long if poverty is taken out of the equation;
- Poverty is a multi-dimensional challenge, a hydra-headed monster, that manifests in various forms as loss of self-esteem or dignity, social exclusion, exclusion from decision structures, lack of access to decent jobs, income deprivation, impaired access to health, education, potable water, sanitation, clean energy, and whatever makes life worth living;
- Tackling the poverty challenge calls for the adoption of a multi-pronged, multi-disciplinary and holistic approach, and the building of partnerships;



- The COVID-19 pandemic has made an already bad situation worse. Even before the onset of the pandemic, the world was not on track to meet SDG Goal 1 by 2030. The pandemic has significantly aggravated the poverty challenge;
- The COVID-19 pandemic disproportionately affects the poor and vulnerable, women and children, persons with disabilities and other marginalized groups;
- Recent studies indicate 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 of people in poverty;
- By lowering the tempo of economic activity, COVID-19 has reduced global output, heightened the risk of global recession, diverted capital away from developing countries, reduced remittances to poor economies, and placed a cap on the amount of ODA that might have proved helpful in kick-starting the battered economies;
- Context matters in assessing the socio-economic impact of COVID-19, as indeed of any pandemic;
- Countries with strong institutions and professionally competent public services stand a better chance of weathering the COVID-19 storm quickly than their lesser prepared counterparts;
- Effective administration of the emergency relief programmes (targeted at the mitigation of the impact of COVID-19 deprivations) hinges on the design of an implementation framework which enables the administrators to identify potential beneficiaries, track and account for disbursements to vulnerable persons, interdict sharp practices, and sustain the transparency of the entire process;
- Emergency relief administration will also benefit from the application of digital technology, biometrics, beneficiary tracing and random auditing;
- Soaring unemployment, falling investments and reduced remittances are the leading triggers of global poverty; thanks to these factors, poverty may be rising for the first time in 30 years;
- Inequalities between and among social groups, including those based on age, gender, race, ethnicity, migrant status, and disability, are on the rise in both developed and developing countries;

- Target 8.6 on the 2030 Agenda (which calls for the substantial reduction of the number Neither in Employment nor in Education/NEED) is very unlikely to be met, as roughly 75 percent of employed youths work in the informal sector and lack protection, while 126 million young workers still live in poverty;
- The social contract between the state and the citizen is being eroded in many countries. This is reflected in impaired access to justice and weak judicial institutions, human rights violations, limited social protections, and declining citizen trust in public institutions;
- Poverty is likely to rise steeply due to an estimated 20 percent decline in remittances to poor countries, currency depreciation and, and capital flight from low- and middle-income countries; and
- The dire straits in which poor countries find themselves in the wake of COVID-19 dictate the adoption of measures aimed at enhancing the productivity and international competitiveness of factors of production across the board, and a rapid shift from low- to high-value activities.

#### **150. Recommendations Emerging from HLM deliberations**

- In the wake of the COVID-19 devastation, socio-economic policies should be reset to make up for lost time and opportunities;
- People-centred policies should be instituted to allow for scaled up investment in universal healthcare, education, social protection, equitable access to digital technology, and support to micro- and medium-sized enterprises;
- External financing should be supplemented with internal resource mobilization in support of inclusive growth and the creation of decent jobs;
- Liquidity in the economy should be expanded while at the same time maintaining fiscal and macro-economic stability;
- Investment in agriculture and rural development should be scaled up within the context of national poverty eradication policies and plans;
- Investments should be redirected away from wasteful to productive ventures;
- Credible anti-corruption policies should be implemented and the integrity of, and trust in, public institutions should be strengthened;
- To provide an enabling environment for the productive and gainful allocation of resources, Member States should accord the reform of the judiciary and law enforcement agencies high priority;

- The underlying aim of the judicial and law enforcement reform should be to assure the public access to *expeditious and just* dispensation of justice;
- Individual countries should revive and strengthen the social compact with their publics and move rapidly to restore citizen trust in state institutions;
- Adequate attention should be paid not only to the application of relevant ICT software but also to the design of a logical framework for the smooth, hitch-free, and transparent administration of pandemic relief programmes and stimulus packages;
- In anticipation of requests for bail-out in a period of emergency, Member States should update their register of strategic (including small- and medium-size) enterprises, prior to assigning index numbers to those eligible for assistance;
- Member States should invest in digital technology in nature-based solutions;
- Small- and medium-scale enterprises, including women-led businesses, should be assisted to grow and to contribute their fair share to the eradication of poverty;
- Urgent international cooperation should be mobilized to support developing countries through allocation of an extra recovery package, provision of liquidity and financial assistance through postponement of debt repayment; and
- There should be improved support for the efforts of developing countries to establish social protection floors in line with the commitment made by the International Labour Organization (ILO) through recommendation 202, adopted in June 2012.

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## ANNEX A: LIST OF MEMBERS OF THE ALLIANCE FOR POVERTY ERADICATION

1. Algeria
2. Bangladesh
3. Bhutan
4. Botswana
5. Burkina Faso
6. Chile
7. China
8. Ecuador
9. Egypt
10. Ethiopia
11. Grenada
12. Honduras
13. India
14. Indonesia
15. Iraq
16. Jordan
17. Liberia
18. Malawi
19. Mexico
20. Mongolia
21. Morocco
22. Namibia
23. Nicaragua
24. Nigeria
25. Norway
26. Pakistan
27. Palau
28. Qatar
29. Saint Lucia
30. Senegal
31. Sierra Leone
32. South Africa
33. Sri Lanka
34. The Gambia
35. Turkey
36. Uganda
37. Uruguay
38. Viet Nam
39. Zimbabwe