



15 February 2021

Excellency,

Further to the successful conclusion of the Joint Informal High-level Meeting of the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council to commemorate the Twenty-fifth Anniversary of the World Summit for Social Development (WSSD + 25) held on 1 December 2020, we have the pleasure to share with you an informal summary with its highlights.

While enormous progress has been made towards the objectives of the WSSD over the past 25 years, progress has however been uneven, and gaps and challenges remain. We call on all Member States and stakeholders to continue using conventional and innovative approaches to the fulfilment of your commitments to implementing the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals post COVID-19 crisis.

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

Volkan BOZKIR

Munir AKRAM

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

**Summary of the Joint Informal High-level Meeting of the General Assembly
and the Economic and Social Council to commemorate the Twenty-fifth Anniversary
of the World Summit for Social Development (WSSD + 25)
GA Hall, December 1, 2020**

Recording of the meeting: [here](#). Statements of Regional Groups: [here](#)

This event was prepared in collaboration with UNDESA, and the summary was prepared in support of UNDESA.

Highlights

- Despite enormous progress made towards the objectives of the World Summit for Social Development (WSSD) over the past 25 years, progress has been uneven, and gaps and challenges remain.
- The outcomes of the Summit, the Copenhagen Declaration and Plan of Action that forged a historic consensus to put people at the center of development, remain as relevant today as ever, as countries face the social and economic fallout of the COVID-19 crisis.
- The COVID-19 crisis has been the single largest setback for social development in our lifetime, with the poorest and most vulnerable people disproportionately affected.
- The crisis is exacerbating inequalities and vulnerabilities and negatively impacted the abilities of governments to implement the 2030 Agenda and SDGs.
- At the same time, recovery from the COVID-19 crisis provides an opportunity to bring transformative changes needed to build more inclusive, equitable, resilient and sustainable societies, with the Agenda 2030 and SDGs as a blueprint.
- This requires a renewed commitment to ensure equal opportunity, universal protection systems that foster economic security, restructuring of global financial architecture to ensure equity and inclusivity, and robust public institutions that ensure equal rights.
- A COVID-19 vaccine should be made a global public good accessible to all nations on equal footing.
- There is a need to strengthen international solidarity, multilateral cooperation, and genuine partnerships among all stakeholders, to recover better from the COVID-19 crisis, end poverty, combat inequalities, ensure equal access to basic services, including quality education and universal health coverage, and achieve the objectives of the WSSD and the 2030 Agenda.

Opening statement by H.E. Mr. Volkan Bozkir, President of the UN General Assembly (PGA)

H.E. Mr. Volkan Bozkir underlined that the 25th anniversary of the WSSD offers an opportune moment to reflect on our successes, failures, and challenges in creating a better world for all. He noted that the core elements of the Copenhagen Declaration on Social Development, including the interlinkages between people and planet, and the need to leave no one behind, continue to shape our development narratives today. The pandemic is the single largest setback to development gains in our lifetime. It is also a springboard to bounce back further and faster to utilize recovery as means to accelerate action. The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) should serve as the blueprint for a greener, more sustainable, more equitable recovery. In this regard, he reaffirmed United Nations commitment to charge forward through the Decade of Action. The WSSD was built on the need for a culture of cooperation and partnership to address sustainable development. This principle remains true today. Only together, through a multilateral approach, can we recover better from COVID-19 and ensure a future that is more sustainable and more resilient.

Opening statement by H.E. Mr. Munir Akram, President of the Economic and Social Council

H.E. Mr. Munir Akram noted that the WSSD for the first time secured the international consensus that development is for the people and that economic and social development must be promoted together in a balanced way. This balanced approach to development is at the heart of the SDGs and the Agenda 2030. The past 25 years have witnessed extraordinary progress in human and social development, however, the gap between the rich and the poor has been widening giving rise to unprecedented levels of inequalities. Since, inequalities in many ways a legacy of the past centuries of colonialism and occupation, next year, on the 20th anniversary of the Durban Conference, a special meeting of ECOSOC will focus on “Reimagining Equality: Eliminating Racism and Discrimination for all”. The President of the ECOSOC recalled that today the world faces a triple challenge: the COVID-19 virus, the economic recession, and an existential threat posed by climate change. During the times of economic downturn poorest countries and poor and vulnerable people are suffering the most. It is evident that efforts are required to ensure that COVID-19 vaccine should be made available to all; emergency financing – through public and private sector debt relief and restructuring and additional liquidity through new and redistributed SDRs – should be provided to the developing countries to enable them to avoid economic collapse; and we should work to make the world’s financial, trade and technology regimes fairer and equal. During its 2021 cycle, the ECOSOC will endeavor at to build a holistic response to this triple challenge at the Financing for Development (FfD) Forum in April 2021 and the HLPF in July 2021.

Remarks by H.E. Mr. António Guterres, UN Secretary-General

The Secretary-General warned that the COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated pre-existing gaps in social development and wiped out important development gains in a matter of months. The virus poses the highest risk to the most vulnerable. The long-term impacts of the crisis will depend on the actions of governments, institutions and leaders. The pandemic brings new awareness of the social and economic risks that arise from inadequate social protection systems and unequal access to basic services, such as universal quality education and universal health coverage. The pandemic can open the door to the transformational changes needed to build a New Social Contract at the national level and a New Global Deal at the international level. International cooperation and financing should ensure that COVID-19 vaccines and treatments are available and affordable to all.

Statement by H.E. Mr. Liu Zhenmin, Under Secretary-General, UNDESA

H.E. Mr. Liu Zhenmin noted that the WSSD was a critical milestone that put people and their well-being at the center of development. There has been enormous progress since 1995, in reducing extreme poverty, expanding access to education for many, especially girls, improving health outcomes, and promoting social inclusion of disadvantaged groups. But progress has been uneven, and the COVID-19 pandemic is a reminder that the gains are fragile. Changes in the world of work, globalization and technological breakthroughs have led to an increase in hope and aspirations, but they have also led to an increase in insecurities and vulnerable employment. The outcomes to the current crisis will be determined by how we respond. Recovery calls for the reimagining of the social contract in order to address the root causes of inequality and vulnerability. There is a need for strengthening commitment to quality public services that promote equal opportunity, universal social protection systems that foster economic security, and robust public institutions that ensure equal rights. Broad and enduring progress in human well-being requires a collective effort at all levels. Leaders at the WSSD agreed that lasting success requires a coalition of all actors. This sentiment is even more critical today.

Statement by H.E. Ms. María del Carmen Squeff, Chair of the Commission for Social Development (59th session) and Permanent Representative of Argentina

H.E. Ms. María del Carmen Squeff stated that the Commission for Social Development has been a key body of the UN in charge of the follow-up and implementation of the Copenhagen Declaration and Programme of Action. As the world is in crisis, it is imperative to claim the objectives of the WSSD. Alarming levels of inequality mean that there is a need to act urgently to build an inclusive, sustainable and resilient future for all. Member states must prioritize social development and human well-being at the heart of our response to the COVID-19 crisis. We must implement measures for vulnerable groups and ensure that a vaccine is a global public good accessible to all nations on equal footing. The 59th Session of the CSocD will take place in February 2021 under the priority theme “A socially just transition towards sustainable development: The role of digital technologies on social development and well-being of all”. The international community must act together with the common aim of leaving no one behind. The world must head towards more inclusive and egalitarian societies so that the objectives of the WSSD become a reality.

Video statement from H.E. Mr. Danilo Türk, President of the World Leadership Alliance – Club de Madrid and former President of Slovenia (2007-2012)

H.E. Mr. Danilo Türk took stock of progress since WSSD, underlining that there were improvements and setbacks. Prior to 2020, global statistics on poverty reduction suggested that the world was on a path that would enable the eradication of poverty and leaving no one behind. However, the pandemic has had grave economic and social consequences. The basic principles of the Copenhagen Declaration remain fully valid, but the specific tasks are more demanding than ever. Robust economic policies and strong international cooperation will be needed. This includes debt alleviation and debt restructuring, issuing additional Special Drawing Rights, and addressing the problems of tax evasion and tax havens. Ambitious social policies will also be needed to build forward better and to achieve greater resilience. Mr. Danilo Türk called for next WSSD that should meet by 2025, and no later than 10 years after the adoption of the Agenda 2030.

Statement by H.E. Mr. Mohamed Siad Doualeh, Permanent Representative of Djibouti in behalf of the African Group

Vulnerable groups have been hardest hit by the COVID-19 crisis. The pandemic has reaffirmed the need to put people at the center of development. African countries are facing multiple challenges including, widening inequality, changing population dynamics, rapid technological change and its impact on the future of work, and environmental degradation and climate change. Eradicating poverty by 2030 requires inclusive structural transformation, job-rich economic growth, and policies and a regulatory environment to reduce inequalities. Access to digital technologies has improved and benefits have been felt. However, more needs to be done, especially in terms of electrification and digital skills and literacy. The Africa Union Commission (AUC) and International Energy Agency (IEA) organized in November 2020 a Ministerial Forum on ‘Securing Africa’s Energy Future in the Wake of Covid-19’. The COVID-19 crisis is the opportunity to put in place inclusive policies to help countries to build back better and to be more resilient. Cooperation is needed to promote universal access to basic services and social protection for all. There is a need to fully implement the Paris Agreement. The Permanent Representative urged international community to wave economic sanctions that can undermine countries’ capacities to respond to the pandemic and build back better.

Statement by H.E. Mr. Mohammed Hussein Bahr Aluloom, Permanent Representative of Iraq in behalf of the Asia-Pacific Group

The Asia-Pacific Group welcomed the progress made with the implementation of the Copenhagen Declaration and Programme of Action, while expressing deep concern about slow and uneven

progress and remaining gaps. COVID-19 has compounded existing challenges and has had a negative impact on the abilities of governments to achieve the 2030 agenda. The pandemic has made the prospect of achieving all SDGs more difficult. The COVID-19 crisis has further exacerbated existing inequalities and vulnerabilities. The crisis not only exposes gaps and exacerbates challenges, but also provides opportunities for crisis response policies and measures to build back better in order to create a more resilient and inclusive society. 25 years after the WSSD, poverty is still a major challenge for governments and the United Nations system. The COVID-19 pandemic had a disproportionate effect on older persons, including risks they faced in accessing social protection, health services and digital inclusion. We need to promote inclusion, unity and solidarity in response to the COVID-19 pandemic and to prevent, speak out and take strong action against racism, xenophobia, hate speech, violence, and discrimination. The Asia-Pacific group calls for international solidarity and multilateral cooperation to address the COVID-19 pandemic and its associated impacts on sustainable development. The Asia-Pacific group calls for fulfilling commitments under the Paris agreement. More needs to be done to tackle health inequities and inequalities within and among countries through political commitment, policies and international cooperation.

Statement by H.E. Mrs. Milica Pejanović Đurišić, Permanent Representative of Montenegro on behalf of the Group of Eastern European States

The Group of Eastern European States reaffirmed its commitment to the fulfillment and implementation of the Copenhagen Declaration and Programme of Action, which was a historic milestone that paved the way for further efforts on sustainable development, including the Agenda 2030 and its SDGs. The COVID-19 crisis is having a devastating impact on sustainable development. Women, children, youth, older persons, persons with disabilities, and people in vulnerable situations are most affected. With millions of people being pushed back into poverty, we are now facing the risk of withering the progress achieved in the implementation of the outcome of the world WSSD and the 2030 Agenda. The Copenhagen Programme of Action remains as relevant as ever. The COVID-19 crisis has reaffirmed the need of placing people at the center of development. A return to the pre-pandemic situation is not the solution. Building back better requires rethinking of the existing economic and financial models. The crisis is an opportunity to correct the inadequacy of existing structures by investing in social protection and improving access to quality social and health care services. Countries need to work together towards these goals. The UN remains indispensable in steering our way out of this global crisis, both through providing support to the most vulnerable countries and by sharing knowledge and showing examples of effective policies, enabling exchange of experiences and best practices.

Statement by H.E. Mr. Walton Alfonso Webson, Permanent Representative of Antigua and Barbuda, on behalf of Latin American and Caribbean States (GRULAC)

COVID-19 pandemic requires that the international community show greater solidarity and cooperation. The content and spirit of the Copenhagen Declaration and Programme of Action are more valid than ever. The values of cooperation and solidarity are becoming increasingly relevant in the design of a collective response to the COVID-19 crisis. GRULAC expressed its strong support for immunization against COVID-19 to be declared a public good of humanity. GRULAC reiterated its commitment to resolution 74/274 of the General Assembly (20 April 2020) on “International cooperation to ensure global access to medicines, vaccines and medical equipment to face COVID-19”. The equitable and fair distribution of the benefits of economic growth requires the implementation of innovative strategies to ensure inclusive development and access to universal basic services. GRULAC remains committed to protect the environment, including the preservation of biodiversity and curbing the consequences of climate change. The 2030

Agenda is the most relevant framework for tackling complex and interrelated global challenges. GRULAC reiterates its determination on the pressing need to redouble national and multilateral efforts to address the current health and economic crisis.

Statement by H.E. Mrs. Carolyn Rodrigues-Birkett, Permanent Representative of Guyana on behalf of the Group of 77 and China

The pandemic has compounded existing obstacles to development, exacerbated inequalities and vulnerabilities, and negatively impacted the abilities of governments to achieve the 2030 agenda and SDGs. The WSSD outcomes continue to serve as a touchstone for social development. The Group of 77 and China reaffirm its commitment to fulfilling the provisions of the Copenhagen Declaration and Programme of Action. Poverty eradication remains the Group's highest priority and greatest challenge. Vulnerable groups face the brunt the unequal consequences of the COVID-19 crisis. It is imperative that today's meeting should be accompanied by swift, decisive, and real actions and solutions to address the COVID-19 pandemic and to build back better towards more inclusive, sustainable and resilient societies. The group supports efforts underway to develop a safe and effective COVID-19 vaccine which must be declared a global public good, affordable and available to all. The group supports global cooperation, multilateralism and genuine partnerships among all stakeholders to support national efforts to fight inequality and eradicate poverty. The group emphasized the importance of scaling up the mobilization of resources for sustainable development, including through Official Development Assistance, innovative financing, capacity building support, technology transfer and trade. The group remains commitment to achieve the full and effective implementation of the outcomes of the WSSD.

Statement by H.E. Mr. Silvio Gonzato, Deputy Head of Delegation of the EU to the UN on behalf of the EU and its Member States

The European Social Summit held in 2017 in Gothenburg proclaimed the European Pillar of Social Rights, which is the main framework for implementing the social dimension of the 2030 Agenda. In early 2021, an action plan to implement the principles of the European Pillar of Social Rights will be put forward. The pandemic has magnified existing inequality. In order to build back better, the recovery needs to be fair, gender-responsive, inclusive and resilient, with just transitions for the green and digital transformations and inclusive social policies. Recovery from the COVID -19 crisis requires a fast, massive and coordinated global response. Economic recovery goes hand in hand with social justice, social protection and decent work. Vulnerable groups deserve special protection as they are particularly affected by the crisis. The pandemic has a gender dimension by exacerbating existing gender inequality, excessively affecting women and girls. The EU has put together a stimulus package of 1.8 trillion euros to boost recovery. To alleviate the social impact of the pandemic worldwide, the EU has launched its "Team Europe" to support partners efforts to tackle the crisis with 36 billion euros. The decade of action must see all of us deliver the 2030 Agenda.