

Informal interactive dialogue with Candidates for the position of UN Secretary-General

- Mr António Guterres, 7 May 2021, 10am-1 pm, GA Hall

Additional Civil Society questions

Mr. Aryan Mishra from India

Please let us know **what action plan you have to make sure no country is left behind for vaccination of COVID-19?** Millions of people are dying, how you see the **act of patent of vaccines** by developed nations and what implications it can have on the vaccination programme of developing nations?

Answer: The COVID-19 pandemic has demonstrated the need for renewed and reinvigorated multilateralism; solidarity and effective multilateralism are the key to suppress transmission of the virus, including through equitable access to vaccines. No one is safe unless everyone is safe. The ACT-Accelerator – *the global collaboration to accelerate the development, production, and equitable access to COVID-19 tests, treatments, and vaccines* - and its COVAX facility are a good example of the solidarity needed. COVAX aims to deliver at least 2 billion doses of vaccines in 2021, bridging the gap between high-income economies and the rest of the global community.

Last week, I called on the G20 to set up a Task Force that brings together all countries with vaccine production capacities, the World Health Organization, the ACT-Accelerator partners and international financial institutions, able to deal with the pharmaceutical companies and other key stakeholders. It should aim to at least double manufacturing capacity by exploring all options, from voluntary licenses and technology transfers to patent pooling and flexibility on intellectual property rights. The Task Force should address equitable global distribution by using the ACT Accelerator and its COVAX facility, and it should be co-convened at the highest levels by the major powers who hold most of the global supply and production capacity, together with the multilateral system. I am ready to mobilize the entire United Nations System to support this effort.

In terms of patents, waivers of intellectual property protections regarding Covid-19 vaccines are important considerations as they open the opportunity for vaccine producers to share the knowledge and technology that will allow the effective expansion of locally-produced vaccines and can significantly increase the supply to the COVAX facility. We must also ensure that countries have the materials required to produce these vaccines. It will be important for us to use the convening power of the UN to support leadership for a unified global push that is based on principles of equity and solidarity to: (i) get past COVID-19 as a health threat, in particular by ensuring vaccines are available to everyone everywhere as soon as possible; (ii) ensure a sustained joined-up approach to the pandemic's wider collateral impacts on economies and societies (including by supporting the national socio-economic response and recovery plans); and (iii) come together in an all-out effort to prevent, prepare for, mitigate and respond to any future pandemics.

NYU Center on International Cooperation

Considering that there are many more people yet to be born in this century than are currently living and taking into the account the intergenerational impact of decisions that we make today (on climate, on violence, on issues of migration etc.). What will you do as a Secretary-General to ensure that the interests of future generations are accounted for in UN decision making? Would you consider setting up an accountability mechanisms or distinct office or agency to help the multilateral system take into account and consider the interests of future generations in its decision making?

Answer: This is an issue close to my heart. In my Call to Action for Human Rights, launched last year, I refer specifically to the rights of future generations, especially climate justice. The promises made in the UN Charter and the Universal Declaration were explicitly to future as well as current generations. The climate emergency threatens the rights and dignity not only of millions of people worldwide but also of people yet to be born. We are currently developing ideas of how we can better take into account intergenerational justice in decision-making, and I will report on the outcome of these deliberations in the “common agenda” report in September 2021, offering concrete suggestions in this area.

Red Dot Foundation

What will you do differently to ensure that women and girls are not left behind and that we can accelerate gender equality?

Answer: Unlocking the capacity of half of the world’s population will directly contribute to more effective outcomes for everyone. I will continue to call on global leaders to act together to make gender equality a reality by: (i) realizing women’s equal rights fully, through the repeal of discriminatory laws and the enacting of positive measures; (ii) ensuring equal representation – from company boards to parliaments, from higher education to public institutions – through special measures and quotas; (iii) targeting women’s economic inclusion through targeted credit and investments, protection of jobs, equal pay and significant investments in the care economy and social protection; (iv) ensuring each country enact an emergency response plan to address violence against women and girls as a priority and follow through with funding, policies and political will to end this scourge, and ; (v) give space to the intergenerational transition (that is underway) to young women advocating for the change we need.

Beyond what I encourage Governments to do, I am committed to ensure that the UN leads by example. Gender parity has been established at the highest levels of the UN for the first time in the Organization’s history, and I have increased the focus on funding for gender equality as insufficient investment is a significant obstacle to gender equality. To ensure the Organization is funding the most effective outcomes, targets have been set and progress is being monitored through system-wide budget and spending tracking and reporting. In addition, I have made five commitments for the UN system to: (i) advocate for GDP that include measures of wellbeing and sustainability; (ii) for unpaid care work to be valued; (iii) advocate for women’s full role in peace processes; (iv) increase the understanding of the linkages between violence against women and girls, and international peace and security; and to (v) end default male bias and the data gap throughout the Organization’s work.

Universal Esperanto Association

With its six official languages, multilingualism is central to the cooperative problem-solving work of the United Nations. In addition, with the urgent need to build back after COVID-19 and the vital work of striving for the Sustainable Development Goals, communicating with civil society in languages people understand is more important than ever. As an NGO in consultative status with the UN that promotes peace through intercultural understanding, the Universal Esperanto Association (UEA) asks the candidates how they will advance multilingualism in day-to-day work throughout the UN community and in communication with civil society.

Answer: I have made multilingualism one of my priorities and used three of the official languages in my own statements. To advance multilingualism in the work of the Secretariat, we incorporated it in the compacts of senior managers, under “commitment to diversity”, along with gender parity and geographical diversity. I receive annual updates on their progress in reaching this target. In 2021, we established a dedicated working group to oversee the development of the policy framework for multilingualism. The goal is to support the mainstreaming of multilingualism throughout the Secretariat, by integrating language considerations into decision-making, policy formulation, budgetary processes, programme implementation, knowledge management and reporting.

Our external communication efforts aim at communicating with as many people as possible in a language that they could understand. We produce daily content about our work in nine languages (six official languages, as well as Hindi, Kiswahili and Portuguese), which is disseminated through UN News and social media. We also produce, translate and share content in at least 126 languages through the global network of UN Information Centres and Resident Coordinator offices. Under the Verified initiative, a key pillar in our COVID-19 communications response, the United Nations and our partners have produced digital content in at least 50 languages. Our outreach efforts are also done in as many languages as possible, for example, through our guided tours at the UN premises, which continued virtually when we reduced our footprints in the buildings during the Covid-19 crisis. Ideally, we would want to communicate in more languages but it will depend on the financial support from Member States.