



THE PRESIDENT
OF THE
GENERAL ASSEMBLY

5 May 2021

Excellency,

Further to my letter dated 12 March and in accordance with General Assembly resolution 74/231 entitled “Development cooperation with middle-income countries”, I have the honour to transmit herewith the concept note for the high-level meeting on middle-income countries, to be held at the United Nations Headquarters in New York on 17 June (a.m. and p.m.) and 18 June (p.m.) 2021.

The first day on 17 June will comprise an opening segment with a stocktaking component followed by three interactive panels, addressing key aspects of the gaps and challenges of middle-income countries in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The interactive panels will focus on the economic dimension of sustainable development, the consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic and the required support to middle-income countries from the UN Development System, as well as the global economic ecosystem including international financial institutions and the private sector.

The afternoon on 18 June will be dedicated to a high-level plenary segment and the closing segment. The list of speakers for the plenary segment will open for inscription on Monday, 17 May 2021, at 10 a.m. until Friday, 4 June 2021, at 5 p.m. For inscribing on the list of speakers, please contact the General Assembly Affairs Branch (email: galindo@un.org with copy to gaspeakerslist@un.org).

The time limit for statements will be three minutes for individual delegations and five minutes for statements delivered on behalf of groups of States. The list of speakers will be established in accordance with established practices of the General Assembly. The provisional list of speakers, to be circulated on Monday, 7 June 2021, will be determined on a first-come, first-served basis, based on the level of representation. Time limits will be strictly implemented to allow all inscribed speakers to deliver statements. In view of the limited time available for the plenary segment, pre-recorded video statements will be played without introductions by the representatives physically present in the General Assembly Hall. Details on the guidelines for submission of the pre-recorded statements can be found attached. Delegations are also encouraged to send their statements to estatements@un.org.

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

I look forward to fruitful exchanges of experiences and lessons learnt from Member States and key actors of the international community.

The programme of the meeting will be circulated in due course. For further information on the meeting, your office may contact my Advisers Ms. Laura Piazza (laura.piazza@un.org) and Ms. Nehali Anupriya (nehali.anupriya@un.org).

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



Volkan BOZKIR



High-Level Meeting on Middle-Income Countries



17-18 June 2021, United Nations Headquarters, New York

Concept Note

Background

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development recognizes that middle-income countries (MICs) face significant challenges to achieve sustainable development, as they are home to 70% of the global poor. The pandemic has made these challenges even more acute. Foreign direct investments have shrunk dramatically and investment in all sustainable development goals (SDG) sectors fell sharply except for renewable energy. Greenfield investments in SDG sectors in developing and transition economies is now 27% lower than before the adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and international project finance is 12% lower. Furthermore, many MICs are characterized by fragmented social and economic structures, with a significant share of employment in informal or low-productivity sectors. An overarching concern for MICs lies in avoiding lost decades of development gains, finding a way to establish an inclusive, sustainable, and resilient recovery. The main challenge thereby lies in access to affordable financing and debt relief to enable countries to respond to the multifaceted crisis. Developing countries are not nearing the end of the pandemic and strengthening countries' efforts to counteract these pressing issues is important.

Before the pandemic, there was a global USD 2.5 trillion financing gap per year to achieve the SDGs, as a result of the impact of COVID-19, this now stands at USD 4.2 trillion per year. Not only has Official Development Assistance, in general, been on the decline over the last years, as donor countries have seen record budget deficits, but also external private finance inflows to developing economies have dropped significantly.

Countries were facing debt distress prior to the current crisis and these difficulties have worsened significantly. In just one-year, public debt increased by 15% to reach \$10 trillion as a result of the dual challenge of declining revenue and the attendant health and economic response to the COVID-19 crisis.

The socioeconomic consequences of the pandemic are expected to push an estimated 120 million people into extreme poverty in 2021. This exacerbates the risk of major development setbacks that would, in turn, increase vulnerability to future pandemics, climate change and other global challenges. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, countries found themselves facing multiple crises simultaneously: health, debt, climate, education, inequality, and security systems, as the strain on financing has compromised their ability to respond to already existing problems. There is a risk of a domino effect of one exacerbating another.

Many MICs face important fiscal deficits, increasing public and corporate debt, tax avoidance, trade protectionism, and heavy reliance on the tourism sector, all of which

are aggravated by the COVID-19 pandemic. Yet, MICs have not benefited from initiatives like the G20 Debt Service Suspension Initiative (DSSI) or the Common Framework for Debt Treatments beyond the DSSI, and income criteria have excluded MICs from many forms of assistance in responding to the pandemic. As a result, resources needed to respond to the health, social, and climate crises are diverted to debt servicing.

The General Assembly recognizes the critical role of the UN development system in supporting efforts to address the diverse development needs of MICs in a coordinated manner in line with national priorities and needs and taking into account variables beyond per capita income criteria.¹ The current context requires the international community to think beyond effective cooperation to have a meaningful impact on the current situation of MICs. Bold and new thinking combined with global solidarity is needed. The UN development system, international community, regional banks and multilateral financial institutions have an important role to play in supporting MICs in their efforts to achieve the sustainable development goals and to address special challenges facing the most vulnerable countries and MICs. Innovative new mechanisms are urgently needed to help MICs address debilitating debt and increase financial liquidity. In order to achieve more debt sustainability, the implementation of transparency principles and more data are needed and all – public and private – creditors need to participate in the solution finding to tackle the structural nature of the sovereign debt. If the international community fails to support MICs, the debt crisis threatens vital investment to tackle poverty, inequality, and climate change for years to come and potentially receding the implementation of the 2030 Agenda into distance.

Mandate and Objective

The United Nations General Assembly, in its resolution A/RES/67/290², emphasized that the concerns and specific challenges of MICs should be given consideration with the aim of enhancing engagement and implementing commitments in achieving sustainable development. The first high-level meeting on MICs was held on 4 December 2018 highlighting the role of South-South cooperation and triangular cooperation in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

The high-level meeting is being held under the theme “Finetuning the development system approach to address the needs of middle-income countries” and organized to take stock of the current landscape for MICs in discussing the progress on issues identified in the Summary of the 2018 UNGA High-Level Meeting on MICs, and the report A/74/269 of the Secretary General entitled “Development cooperation with middle-income countries”. The discussions will also address the current socio-economic fallout from the pandemic and how it has underlined and exacerbated existing fragilities, with severe consequences for achieving the SDGs. The high-level meeting aims to:

- facilitate ongoing exchange of experiences among MICs and other actors on implementation of the SDGs;

¹ Based on A/74/231, OP10.

² Format and organizational aspects of the high-level political forum on sustainable development.

- identify actionable entry points (short- and medium-term) to convert the current crisis caused by the COVID-19 pandemic into opportunities for a more inclusive, resilient and sustainable recovery.
- highlight priority actions to accelerate efforts and advance progress and to elaborate on concrete, practical actions, assistance, tools or platforms through which the UN System could support MICs in addressing their specific gaps and challenges.

The discussions are intended to create action-oriented and solutions-based recommendations to Member States and actors of the international community which will support MICs to build their productive capacity and resilience towards the attainment of the 2030 Agenda while also enhancing their support to other developing countries.

Format and Key Questions

The high-level meeting will take place on 17th June and in the afternoon of 18th June, comprising an opening segment including a stocktaking component, three interactive panel discussions, a plenary segment for general discussion, and a closing segment. The three interactive panels will address the following issues:

Interactive Dialogue I: Tackling the structural gaps

MICs as a group face structural gaps, incomplete institutional processes and socio-economic disparities that constrain their development and efforts to implement the 2030 Agenda. The dialogue will focus on addressing the priority issues preventing progress, which have been exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as the middle-income trap. The use of a Vulnerability Index, complementing the use of multidimensional measures of poverty and development will be thematized, and their use in identifying priority areas for policy and structural change explored.

- *Which structural gaps did the spread of COVID-19 underline and exacerbate?*
- *What are concrete national and international actions that can be taken to support economic recovery and address these gaps?*
- *How can the closure of the digital divide and growing inequalities be facilitated to guarantee broad access to income and technology?*
- *How can the dichotomy of economic and social structures in many MICs be best addressed?*

Interactive Dialogue II: The UN development system

For the purpose of analyzing the support that the UN Development System can give to MICs, a revision of the concept of development used to channel cooperation resources to achieve sustainable and inclusive growth is in order. Deliberations on the merits of developing a framework of support to MICs will be facilitated.

- *How can the repositioned UNDS contribute to overcoming the challenges faced by MICs?*
- *How does the UN ensure a well-coordinated crisis response? At country, regional and global level?*
- *How does the UNDS ensure global and regional assets are effectively being mobilized to the country level? What new tools has the UNDS repositioning provided?*

- *How would a newly developed vulnerability index help finetune the development system towards MICs?*

Interactive Dialogue III: The global financial ecosystem and financing for sustainable development

With enhancements of the correct incentives and the deliberate creation of facilities or mechanisms, the global financial ecosystem, its main institutions, and the private sector can be more effectively mobilized to support the necessary sustainable investments for the SDGs in MICs. The dialogue will address what is needed to attract private finance at the necessary scale into MICs. Additionally, the dialogue aims to identify instruments and concrete actions for resilient, inclusive, sustainable and connected recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic and discussing financing issues, including debt, access to official financing flows for development, private investment and initiatives.

- *What are the priorities for the reform of the multilateral trading system? How can the global value chains be adjusted without excluding MICs?*
- *What role could debt relief play for a green and inclusive recovery? How could the private sector be involved? What role can financial instruments such as debt swaps and SDG aligned instruments play in facilitating a green and equitable recovery?*
- *What are the limitations of existing debt relief initiatives and what role do credit rating agencies play in the discussions?*
- *What can be done to facilitate MICs' access to liquidity at times of crises and beyond?*
- *What policies could facilitate domestic and foreign private financing?*
- *How can public policy in MICs increase the supply of long-term investment and promote sustainable investment opportunities in developing countries?*
- *What role can existing public institutions such as national and multilateral development banks play in providing or leveraging long-term financing?*
- *How can MICs ensure that recovery investments are aligned with the SDGs?*
- *How to ensure that vulnerable groups are benefitting from new development financing opportunities generated for MICs?*

Outcome

The President of the General Assembly will prepare a summary of the discussion, which will inform the forthcoming Secretary-General's report on the implementation of resolution A/RES/74/231.

ANNEX

Audio-Video Guidelines for Pre-Recorded Statements

Please read this entire document before submitting your pre-recorded video statement

Kindly note that all pre-recorded video statements should be submitted at least four days before the date that the statement is scheduled to be broadcast.

Audio visual file general guidance for Broadcast and Conferences

For technical questions, please call **+1 212 963 8648, Option 3**.

Video

For file submission video quality preferably:

- HD resolution of 1920 x 1080 pixels in an aspect ratio of 16:9
- 29.97 frames per second (60 fields) known as 1080i/29.97, top field first; colour sub-sampled at a ratio of 4:2:2 (8 bits per channel with 10 bits per channel preferred). As is common with MPEG4 or MOV files.

Alternately file submission video quality as a minimum:

- HD resolution of 1280 x 720 pixels in an aspect ratio of 16:9
- 30 frames per second (60 fields) known as 720p top field first; colour sub-sampled at a ratio of 4:2:2 (8 bits per channel with 10 bits per channel preferred). As is common with MPEG4 or MOV files.

Audio

- General recommendation is that material should conform to SMPTE 382M Standard or AES3
- The preferred bit depth for audio recording is 24 bits per sample. The minimum bit depth is 16 bits per sample.
- All audio should be recorded at a minimum sample rate of 48 kHz, although sampling at 96 kHz is

encouraged. Recording or digitizing audio using an uncompressed lossless codec, such as WAV-PCM.

- Sound must be recorded with appropriately placed microphones, giving minimum background noise and without peak distortion.
- The audio must be free of spurious signals such as clicks, noise, hum and any analogue distortion.
- The audio must be reasonably continuous and smoothly mixed and edited. Audio levels must be appropriate to the scene portrayed and dynamic range must not be excessive. They must be suitable for the whole range of domestic listening situations.
- Surround and Stereo audio must be appropriately balanced and free from phase differences.
- The audio must not show dynamic and/or frequency response artefacts due to the action of noise reduction or low bit rate coding systems.
- Please kindly **refrain from including any background music** with the speech statement.

Interpretation requirements related to the pre-recorded video messages:

1. Ensure the speaker speaks clearly and at a moderate pace to enable accurate interpretation;
2. Provide a copy of the text of the statement to **estatements@un.org**;
3. For languages other than an official UN language, *provide an audio recording of the interpretation into one of the UN official languages embedded in the video*. In addition, provide the text of your statement translated into one of the official languages.¹

IMPORTANT NOTE REGARDING ORIGINAL LANGUAGE STATEMENTS:

Please insert the original language audio into the left channel (or channel 1) of the video, and kindly include an official UN language translation in the right channel (or channel 2). English is the preferable UN language translation.

The audio should not be submitted in separate files. Both audio channels (original and official languages), should be embedded in the video file.

¹ In case of non-official languages, when a video address is played back and broadcast on the “floor” channel in the original language, the audio of the pre-recorded translation needs to be synchronously broadcast on the corresponding language channel.

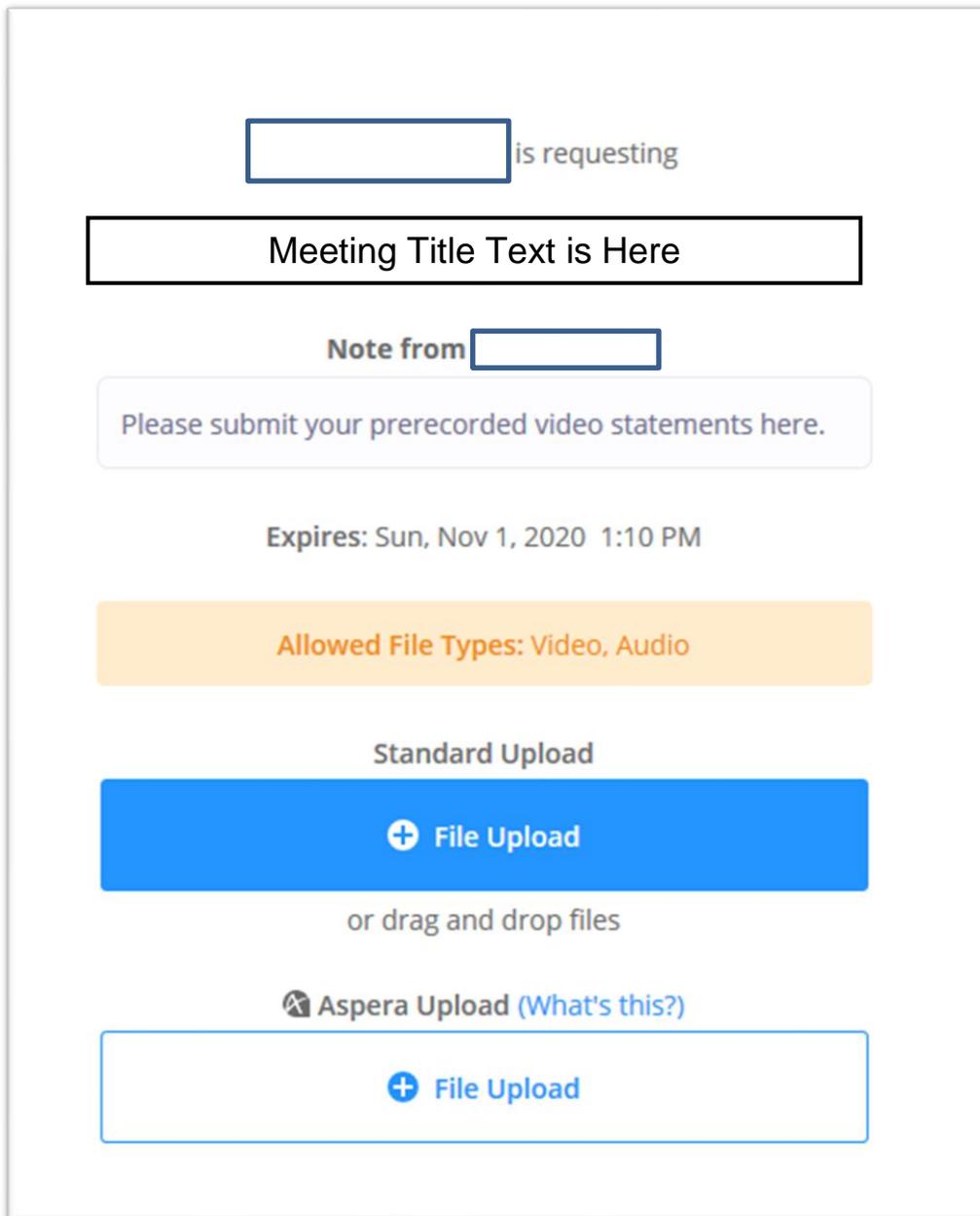
File-Naming and Submission Guidelines

Before submitting your video file, please use the following template for naming your file (without brackets):

[Delegation or Country or Presenter Name]_[EVENT DATE]_[EVENT NAME].[extension] *(please exclude the brackets)*

Please follow the steps below for submitting your video file.

1. You should have received a link to the cloud storage space from your United Nations coordinator or representative. The link will take you to a web page like the one in the image below.



The image shows a web interface for file submission. At the top, there is a text input field followed by the text "is requesting". Below this is a large rectangular box containing the text "Meeting Title Text is Here". Underneath is a "Note from" label followed by another text input field. A light blue rounded rectangle contains the instruction "Please submit your prerecorded video statements here." Below this, the expiration date and time are shown: "Expires: Sun, Nov 1, 2020 1:10 PM". An orange banner highlights the "Allowed File Types: Video, Audio". The interface then offers two upload options: "Standard Upload" with a blue button labeled "+ File Upload" and the text "or drag and drop files" below it; and "Aspera Upload (What's this?)" with a white button labeled "+ File Upload" below it.

2. Click on the blue **“File Upload”** button (Standard Upload), or drag-and-drop your video file into the dialog window.

Once you have selected or dragged-and-dropped your file, the following dialog window should appear. Click on the **“Show Metadata”** button.

[Name] is requesting

Meeting Title Text is Here

Note from [Name]

Please submit your prerecorded video statements here.

Expires: Sun, Nov 1, 2020 1:10 PM

Allowed File Types: Video, Audio
File Metadata Requested: Please select files to add.

Expand All

+ Add Files

IMG_6688.MOV **SHOW METADATA**

1 File (3.1 MB)

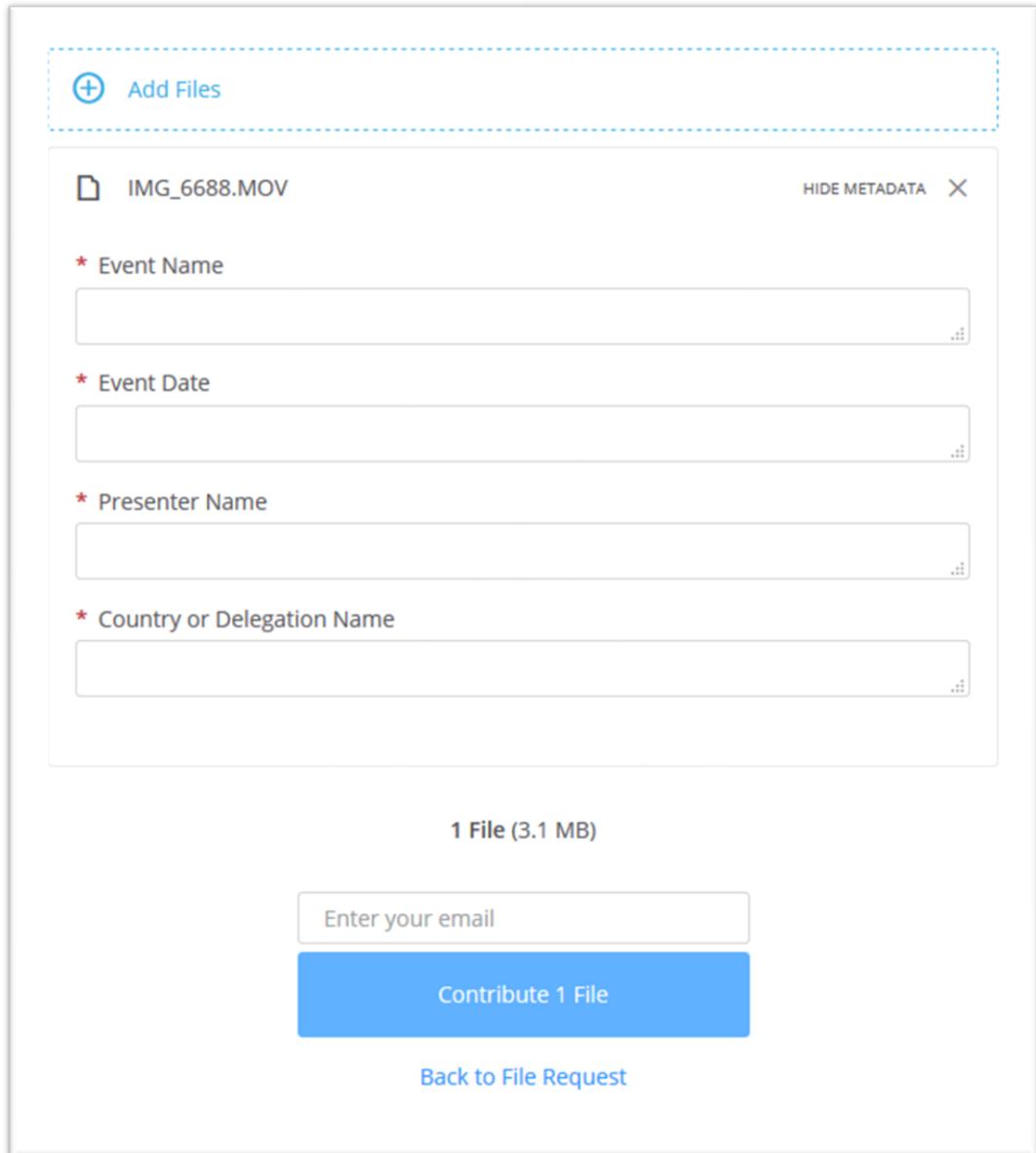
Enter your email

Contribute 1 File

[Back to File Request](#)

3. You will then be prompted to enter a few mandatory metadata fields. ***Please note that if you do not enter data in these fields, your file will not be accepted by the cloud upload service.*** The information you are asked to enter is as follows in the image below. Enter the requested information and then enter your **email address** in the indicated field. Then, click on the blue **“Contribute 1 File”** button.

Your video file will be uploaded into the system.

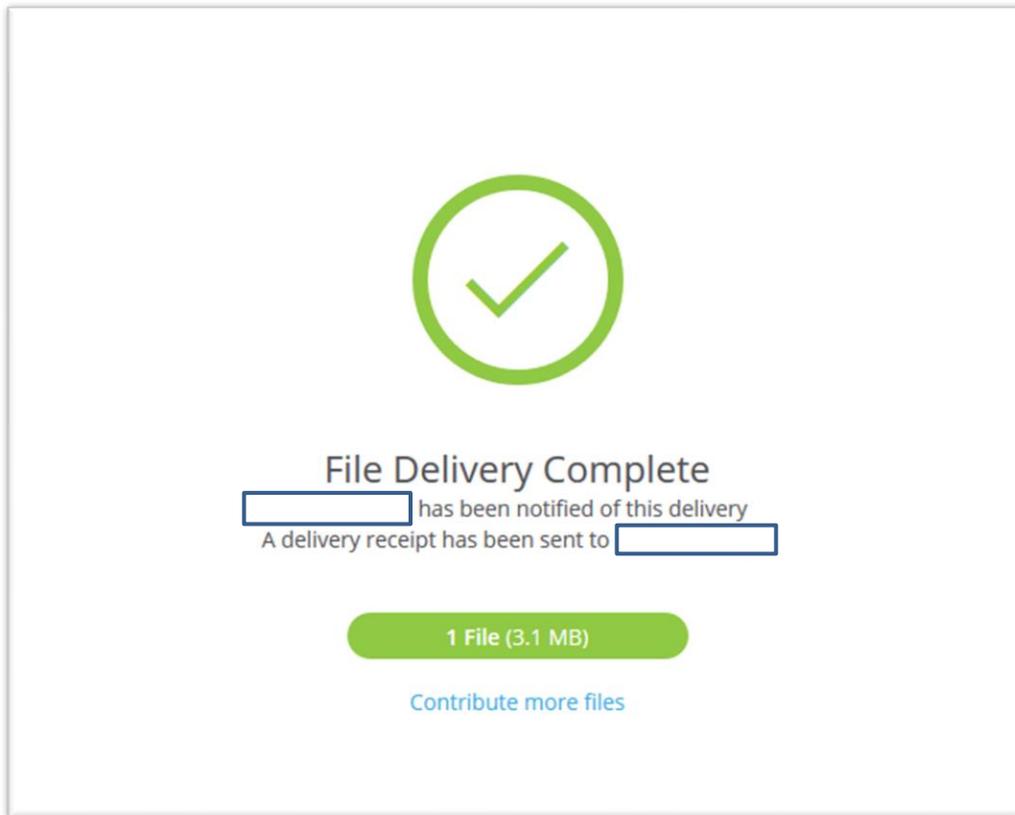


The screenshot shows a web interface for uploading a file. At the top, there is a dashed blue box containing a plus icon and the text "Add Files". Below this, a file named "IMG_6688.MOV" is shown with a "HIDE METADATA" button and an "X" icon. The metadata section contains four mandatory fields, each with a red asterisk and a text input box with a small grid icon on the right:

- * Event Name
- * Event Date
- * Presenter Name
- * Country or Delegation Name

Below the metadata fields, it displays "1 File (3.1 MB)". At the bottom, there is a text input field labeled "Enter your email", a blue button labeled "Contribute 1 File", and a blue link labeled "Back to File Request".

4. You will then see a progress bar indicator, followed by the dialog window below, indicating successful upload.



For technical questions, please call **+1 212 963 8648, Option 3.**