Mr. Elliott Harris, Assistant Secretary-General of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs and Chief Economist of the United Nations, welcomed participants, including the country economists joining the UNEN meeting for the first time. He noted that the webinar on 12 November, where he had briefed RCOs on the key messages of the UNEN report on *Shaping the Trends of Our Time*, had provided an excellent opportunity to exchange information with country offices. He added that 5 interactive regional webinars are planned for January to contextualize the messages of the UNEN report to the regional level. UNEN members would be invited to participate.

Mr. Harris outlined the main discussion items for the eleventh UNEN meeting: (1) Update on status of thematic briefs; (2) Work on New Economics for Sustainable Development - Alternative economic models and concepts; and (3) Continuation of discussion of UNEN’s contribution to country teams.

**Update on status of thematic briefs**

Colleagues leading the thematic briefs gave an update on their progress:

- UNEP informed that the two briefs on beyond GDP and nature-based solutions had been peer-reviewed by experts. The brief on nature-based solutions had been finalized and would be re-circulated to all UNEN members.
- ECA is looking forward to engaging with colleagues and discussing the specific content and a reasonable timeframe for the preparation of the brief on migration. DESA and UNU-MERIT expressed their interest in collaborating on the brief. FAO shared the following material for the brief: [http://www.fao.org/state-of-food-agriculture/2018/en/](http://www.fao.org/state-of-food-agriculture/2018/en/)
- A timeline for the brief on taxation would be developed early next year. Colleagues were invited to inform Mr. Harris if they are interested in collaborating on this brief.
- UNCTAD noted that a first draft of the Global Green New Deal brief will be ready by mid-December. UNCTAD will also share the brief on debt shortly.
- ILO had informed at the last meeting that first drafts of the informal economy brief and social protection brief had been circulated within contributing agencies and would be finalized soon.

Continuing the earlier discussions on where to post the thematic briefs and on linking communication efforts across the various entities, Mr. Harris offered that a page be set up on the DESA website for UNEN work. Other entities could make reference to that page on their respective websites. Participants welcomed this proposal. Participants also discussed the possibility of branding the thematic briefs as a UNEN product developed under the respective lead agencies and acknowledging the respective contributions.

**Work on New Economics for Sustainable Development - Alternative economic models and concepts**

Mr. Harris noted the vibrant interest shown at the last UNEN meeting in October in the topic of new economics for sustainable development, and referred to the concise and descriptive essay on emerging economic models provided by Chantal Line Carpentier, UNCTAD, at the last meeting. Mr. Harris suggested that one approach to this complex topic would be to task a core group of interested UNEN
members to work on these issues. The deficiencies in the current economic paradigm are evident and there is now an important window of opportunity to address them. Several new concepts, such as the circular, the social and solidarity, the “green”, “blue”, “orange” and “purple” economy, the care economy, the global green new deal, the “intention” economy, “information” economy, etc., would offer entry points for integrating the social and environmental dimensions of sustainable development into a new economic thinking. No other global institution could mobilize the expertise that UNEN members collectively bring to the table to address these complicated issues.

Mr. Harris reiterated discussions at recent UNEN meetings that had highlighted the difficulties in measuring the various dimensions of sustainable development and the need to move beyond GDP as the measure of progress, but also to improve and broaden GDP’s scope as an indicator. Participants agreed that it was very difficult or impossible to develop harmonized indicators or one single indicator. They mentioned the need to develop an overarching framework instead of a competing patchwork of different thematic approaches. Studying specific types of economics, looking for commonalities and developing an overarching framework could help avoid fragmentation. Participants also indicated that lessons learned from ongoing work by the statistics community on updating the system of national accounts and the upcoming release of updated environmental and economic accounts should be taken into consideration.

It was suggested that UNEN could plan for a report on new economics for sustainable development to be released in 2022 – mid-point of SDGs. It was also mentioned that 2021 would be the International Year of Creative Economy for Sustainable Development.

Due to the limited time available for the discussion, Mr. Harris suggested that the twelfth UNEN meeting in December would focus exclusively on the topic of new economics for sustainable development. The thirteenth meeting in January could include a brief presentation on OECD’s system of systems and well-being as further elaboration was needed on that topic.

At the previous and current UNEN meeting, entities shared the following links to existing relevant work:
- UNRISD shared a database of papers on how the “social and solidarity economy” contributes to the SDGs: https://knowledgehub.unsse.org/knowledge-hub/

**Continuation of discussion of UNEN’s contribution to country teams**

Mr. Harris noted that UNEN does not have the resources to support all country economists on the ground in a comprehensive manner. However, the UNEN thematic briefs, the report on *Shaping the Trends of Our Time*, and his briefings to RCOs might provide some support, if these reflected the priorities of the country economists. A joint Development Account project among UNEN entities could be considered to address issues of concern to country economists. DCO offered to collect requests from country economists and topics of interest to collaborate with UNEN (contact: nergis.gulasan@un.org), categorize them and bring them to the attention of UNEN. This would help UNEN in tailoring its support to the need of country economists.
Country economists from Iran, Mongolia, Argentina, Egypt, Kuwait, Burundi, Jordan, Namibia and Tajikistan took the floor and raised the following issues:

- Country economists can use the UNEN megatrend analysis and take it forward on the ground.
- The relevance of UNEN thematic briefs was recognized. It was proposed to strengthen their focus on social protection issues. They should also be customized to national priorities.
- An incremental approach for new economics of sustainable development was suggested.
- Priority areas that country economists suggest addressing include debt issues; taxation; infrastructure; post-COVID recovery; financing for development; knowledge-based economy.
- It would be important for country economists to have access to models that they can use to develop alternative scenarios to support policy choices and advocacy efforts. Country economists would benefit from modelling tools to analyze COVID-related impact.
- It would be helpful to provide country economists with simple briefs on socio-economic cost-benefit analysis.
- It would be useful to share examples and models of good cooperation between RCOs and UN entities. Existing models could be replicated.
- The need for strengthening the economics (macro- and micro-) pillar was highlighted.
- Joint capacity-development projects, bringing various entities together, would be welcome.
- It was suggested to strengthen analytical work for CCA analysis. Analytical products (e.g., WESP) can be used for messaging in countries.

Entities shared the following information:

- PAGE COVID-19 Hub and Data Observatory: [https://www.un-page.org/covid](https://www.un-page.org/covid)
- PAGE shared a flyer on support for greening the economic recovery [PAGE-Greening the Economic Recovery (2).pdf](https://www.un-page.org/covid)

Mr. Harris noted that it will be challenging to develop models that will be applicable in the country context. He acknowledged the need for tool kits that can be used in a straightforward way and can guide country economists in discussions with governments. He added that country economists could incrementally adjust the existing tools provided by development partners. Mr. Harris encouraged country economists to reach out to UNEN members with questions and concerns. Based on the list of topics and requests that will be compiled by DCO, UNEN will discuss at upcoming meetings how best to respond to these issues.

**Follow-up action:**

- Colleagues were invited to inform Mr. Harris if they are interested in collaborating on the taxation brief.
- The brief on nature-based solutions would be re-circulated to all UNEN members.
- A page will be set up on the DESA website for UNEN products. Other entities could make reference to that page on their respective websites.
- DCO offered to collect requests from country economists and topics of interest to collaborate with UNEN (contact: nergis.gulasan@un.org), categorize them and bring them to the attention of UNEN.