

Nineteenth Meeting of the
United Nations Economist Network (UNEN)

Wednesday, 8 September 2021
8:30 – 10:30 a.m.

Mr. Elliott Harris, Assistant Secretary-General of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs and Chief Economist of the United Nations, introduced the agenda: (i) New Economics for Sustainable Development (NESD); (ii) Update on Working Groups on Digital Economic Transformation; and on Innovative Financing.

Mr. Harris welcomed participants and informed them that he has been holding, in coordination with DCO, a series of clinics with Resident Coordinators. The first clinic had focused on innovative finance. He referred to the widespread interest for alternative approaches to economic policies due to the impact of COVID-19. He stressed that a key element of recovery post COVID-19 is the inclusion of social protection and climate action to address this universal crisis and that there is a need to do things differently.

Update on Working Groups on Digital Economic Transformation and on Innovative Financing.

Digital Economic Transformation

The three workstreams on Digital Economic Transformation presented updates on (i) Definitional aspects of digital economic transformation; (ii) Digital economic transformation for SMEs; and (iii) Impact of new technologies on employment (literature review). Participants provided comments and inputs and Mr. Harris noted that the respective presentations and papers will be shared within the Network after the meeting for review and further comments.

Innovative Financing

The workstream on Fintech presented an update on fintech/digital finance for financial inclusion. It was agreed that the draft paper would be shared after the meeting for further comments. Project documentation on advancing innovative financing solutions in the Eastern Caribbean that will be submitted to the Joint SDG Fund was briefly introduced.

New Economic for Sustainable Development

Co-leads of the respective Working Groups updated participants on the status of the zero drafts of Policy Briefs.

The Blue Economy Working Group reported on the process, the scope, the interlinkages, the case studies and the structure of the policy brief. Participants were informed that the brief is expected to be completed by October. The Green Economy Working Group presented the current outline of the policy brief and noted that the work on the brief was ongoing. The Circular

Economy Working Group introduced the outline of the policy brief as a basis for discussion of the scope and content of the brief. The Social and Solidarity Economy Working Group reported on its working document and emphasized its link to the other NESD concepts.

The remaining working groups (purple/care; orange/creative; yellow/attention; and frugal/innovation) are planning to share drafts by the end of September.

A proposal was made to prepare a matrix with the links between NESD concepts and of NESD concepts with SDGs.

Mr. Harris reiterated that the draft papers and presentations would be shared with UNEN members for review and comments. He encouraged working group leads to share the drafts with stakeholders beyond UNEN. The UNEN meeting in October would focus on how best to finalize the policy briefs, including policy proposals, and shape their appropriate presentations.