The COVID-19 pandemic continues to serve as a harsh reminder of the perils stemming from global inequities and a reminder of the urgency to redouble efforts towards the achievement of the 2030 Agenda. The equivalent of an unprecedented 255 million jobs were lost as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. This led to a sharp increase in poverty and inequalities. Declining labour income has been distributed unevenly between workers, with youth, women and low-skilled workers seeing the sharpest drops in disposable income. Lower skilled workers who could not benefit from teleworking arrangements were deeply impacted, increasing inequality within countries, but also across countries depending on the severity of the employment impact on the hardest-hit sectors.

Many countries were facing serious challenges prior to the pandemic, including those marked by widespread decent work deficits, growing threats from climate change, rising debts, shrinking fiscal space all while requiring fast and effective interventions to respond to the health crisis. While many high-income countries managed to introduce stimulus packages to offset working hour losses, much of the developing world did not have the fiscal space to do so. This “great divergence” constitutes one of most serious global challenges now facing the world. These differential effects of the crisis are likely to leave an enduring scar on the overall macroeconomic performance of economies. Navigating these challenges successfully will require something of an economic, social and environmental policy revolution.

While efforts rightfully remain on curbing the virus through an equitable vaccination rollout, a parallel global response is needed to address the severe socio-economic fallout and to ensure a just transition to greener growth trajectories. To be effective, the world must invest in a human centered recovery and focus on building resilience through the pursuit of social justice. Such a response should address the pre-existing world of work and climate challenges as well as the immediate impact of the health pandemic with a view to building forward better. This requires increased and targeted investments to address rising poverty and inequalities, strengthening social protection systems, promoting full and productive employment through massive investments in the digital, green, and care economies, strengthening the institutions of work and priority setting through social dialogue.

A green, sustainable, and fair recovery is critical to setting the world on course toward a 1.5°C pathway that will also create jobs, address inequalities, and improve health and food security, benefiting people, planet, and prosperity. Yet, we cannot overlook the challenges that come with the transformation needed. A just transition of the workforce, and the creation of decent work and quality jobs will be a key enabler of the future we want. The transition to carbon-neutral and resource-efficient economies can potentially generate over 100 million jobs by 2030, but also close to 80 million could be lost over the same timeframe. A just transition is about maximizing economic and social gains, while effectively managing the risks by investing in social protection systems and people’s capabilities to realize their full potential and contribute to the productivity of enterprises.

Over the past year, the United Nations, IFIs and G20 have made concerted efforts to respond to the crisis, but rising poverty, unemployment,
vulnerable employment, inequalities, and continued threats imposed by climate change, indicate that much more needs to be done to meet the magnitude of the challenge. The Initiative on Financing for Development in the Era of COVID-19 and Beyond provides a useful blueprint for continued action.

The Event will focus on five pressing Issues:

1. Application of effective economic, social and environmental policies at country level through dialogue with social partners and other stakeholders;
2. The global norms and standards underpinning the socio-economic recovery and a just transition;
3. Current efforts to achieve just transitions in the context of ambitious climate action and the covid recovery and solutions that support accelerating and scaling up these efforts, particularly in developing countries
4. Opportunities and synergies created by integrating policies on climate action, technology, health, jobs, social protection and poverty eradication;
5. Alleviation of key constraints and market failures that impede sustainable development finance and an inclusive job-rich recovery, also benefiting women and youth.

Participants

The High-Level event will include an opening segment followed by a policy discussion to frame the ambitions needed for a socio-economic recovery to advance decent job creation, social protection and poverty eradication. To achieve a human centered recovery, commitments are required from global leaders. Heads of State and Government will be invited to express commitments through a Call to Action with the aim of promoting policy coherence ahead of the fall meeting of the IMF and World Bank, and meetings of the G7 and G20.

The world is counting on solutions and we must act. Together, we can get the world on a fairer, more resilient path forward.
| Closing session | Closing remarks by **Ms. Amina Mohammed**, Deputy Secretary-General, United Nations. | 5 mins |