



COMMISSION for SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

United Nations Headquarters, New York

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United Nations
Department of
Economic and
Social Affairs



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59th Session of the Commission for Social Development

High-level panel discussion on emerging issues: Social policy to promote a more inclusive, resilient and sustainable recovery: Building back better post COVID-19 for the achievement of the 2030 Agenda in the context of the decade of action and delivery for sustainable development

Wednesday, 10 February 2021, 10 a.m. –12 p.m.
Virtual

Draft Concept Note



1. Background

Pursuant to Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) decision in 2006, the Commission for Social Development has, since its 2007 - 2008 review and policy cycle, included an agenda item on ‘Emerging issues’ in its work programme. Under this agenda item, the Commission addresses current issues affecting social development requiring urgent consideration or new cross-cutting issues in the context of evolving global development challenges.

The Bureau of the Commission decided on “Social policy to promote a more inclusive, resilient and sustainable recovery: Building back better post COVID-19 for the achievement of the 2030 Agenda in the context of the decade of action and delivery for sustainable development” as the topic of emerging issues of the 59th session of the Commission. This topical focus, echoing the theme of the 2021 High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development, reflects the Commission’s effort to align its work with that of ECOSOC and the HLPF. The selection of the topic also acknowledges the significant socio-economic challenges brought by the COVID-19 crisis and highlights the importance of social policies to address poverty and inequalities and protect the most vulnerable population.

2. Context – the impact of COVID-19 on social development

The COVID-19 pandemic and its socio-economic consequences have unveiled and further exacerbated pre-existing inequalities and vulnerabilities across regions, threatening to reverse decades of progress in social development. It is projected that in

2020, the world's extreme poverty (\$1.90/day per person) is likely to increase for the first time since 1998.¹ The number of food insecure people could almost double from 135 million in 2019 to 265 million by the end of 2020.² COVID-19-related restrictions (lockdowns and social distancing) have had devastating effects on all, but they have hit those already in vulnerable situations, including marginalized and disadvantaged groups, the hardest.³ In the second quarter of 2020 alone, 17.3 per cent of the total working-hours (corresponding to 495 million full-time equivalent jobs) have been lost; this trend continued also in the third quarter of 2020 (12,1 per cent or 345 million full-time equivalent jobs⁴). Policies and measures to protect people from loss of jobs and/or income during the crisis is therefore crucial, not only to ensure that no one is left behind, but also to ensure that no one is pushed further behind.

The crisis has also reduced Member States' abilities to achieve the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals. In this context, preserving social spending is even more crucial to protect the most vulnerable population who are also the most affected by the crisis. Social policy has to be a key component of a recovery strategy that is inclusive, people-centred, resilient and sustainable, and is able to build back better to achieve the 2030 Agenda.

To recover better, a renewed social contract is needed to make the current socio-economic system more inclusive, equitable, resilient and sustainable. This can be an opportunity to strengthening the role of social policy and to mobilize concerted efforts to advance social progress and well-being of all in the endeavour of achieving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

3. Objectives

The panel will serve to highlight key issues, identify challenges, opportunities, and good practices in promoting a more inclusive resilient and sustainable recovery with aim of achieving inclusive social development and achieving the 2030 Agenda for all. Drawing on a Note by the Secretariat on Emerging Issues and the insights of experts, the overall objective of the panel is to discuss how social policies can ensure inclusive recovery from the COVID-19 crisis so to keep the promise of "leaving no one behind" of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development exchange good policies and measures that have effectively prevented people from falling into poverty by protecting income and jobs; and identify existing gaps and lessons learned. The outcome of the panel discussion will be a unique contribution to the 2021 High Level Political Forum and the ECOSOC high-level segment.

More specifically, the panel aims to:

¹ UNDESA, 2020. The World Economic Situation and Prospects.

² <https://www.wfp.org/news/covid-19-will-double-number-people-facing-food-crises-unless-swift-action-taken>, accessed 15 January 2020.

³ <https://unsdg.un.org/sites/default/files/2020-04/UN-framework-for-the-immediate-socio-economic-response-to-COVID-19.pdf>

⁴ <https://unsdg.un.org/sites/default/files/2020-04/UN-framework-for-the-immediate-socio-economic-response-to-COVID-19.pdf>

- a. Identify opportunities and key challenges facing Member States in addressing socio-economic impacts of COVID-19.
- b. Discuss/examine how social policies can be strengthened/re-set to protect the most vulnerable in society, to enable inclusive recovery from COVID-19 crisis, and socially just transition towards sustainable development.
- c. Exchange information, expertise and good practices at the national, regional and international levels, showcasing successful experience and promising solutions that help mitigate negative impacts of COVID-19 and protect people through social policy and social protection measures, including floors.
- d. Explore how the Commission could continue and enhance its important role in empowering people, promoting inclusive and equitable recovery and contributing to the building of more resilient societies and sustainable development for all.

4. Structure and format of the panel discussion

The high-level panel discussion will be chaired by the Chair of the Commission for Social Development. The Chair will open the panel with brief remarks and introduce the Moderator. The Moderator will introduce the panellists and invite them to make 7 minutes presentations. Following their presentations, the moderator will invite a lead discussant to make 5 minutes intervention, then invite questions directly related to the presentations from the audience/participants. After a short question and answer session, the moderator will open the floor for interactive dialogue.

Panellists are expected to structure their presentations around social policies and concrete and innovative strategies that have proven to be effective in promoting an inclusive, and equitable recovery; and to highlight innovative approaches and lessons learned at the global, regional and national levels.

Highlights and outcomes of the panel discussion will be reflected in the Chair's summary. The summary will be used to prepare inputs of the Commission for Social Development to the ECOSOC, in particular the high-level segment of the ECOSOC and the 2021 High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development under the theme "Sustainable and resilient recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic that promotes the economic, social and environmental dimensions of sustainable development: building an inclusive and effective path for the achievement of the 2030 Agenda in the context of the decade of action and delivery for sustainable development".

5. Guiding questions

The Commission for Social Development may wish to consider the following questions in its deliberations on the emerging issue at its fifty-ninth session:

- Who are the most affected by the (lockdown and social distancing) measures taken to prevent the spread of corona virus? How the most vulnerable population, including women, migrant workers, persons with disabilities, older persons, indigenous people and youth have been affected?
- Building on the temporary measures, in particular social protection measures, taken by governments to mitigate the impact of COVID-19 crisis, how to develop long-term inclusive social policies and sustainable social protection systems that are necessary to enable socially just transition?

- What examples can you share to showcase how social policies and social protection systems have been effective in ensuring inclusive recovery in your region or country?
- What specific policies and actions should be in place at local, national and international levels in order to recover better to advance social development and achieve the 2030 Agenda for all in the context of the decade of action and delivery for sustainable development?

6. Time allocation

The time allocation for the panel discussion is as follows:

Speaker	Suggested speaking time
Chair: Opening remarks and the introduction of panellists	5 minutes
Moderator: introduction/context-setting	5 minutes
Panellists (6): Presentations	7 minutes per panellist
Moderated interactive discussion	5 minutes lead discussant
	Q & A and open dialogue with participants of the Commission (Interventions limited to 3 minutes per speaker) (30 minutes)
Concluding remarks by moderator and Closing by the Chair	10 minutes
	Total duration: 2 hours