



NEWSLETTER
March - May 2021

HIGHLIGHTS

- ◇ The [2021 Humanitarian Affairs Segment](#) (HAS) is scheduled to take place from 23 to 25 June in Geneva and will be chaired by Her Excellency Pascale Baeriswyl, Permanent Representative of Switzerland to the United Nations, as the ECOSOC Vice-President for the HAS. The theme for this year's HAS is "Strengthening humanitarian assistance to face the challenges of 2021 and beyond: mobilizing respect for international humanitarian law, inclusion, gender, innovation and partnerships." The HAS provides a key opportunity for Member States, the United Nations system, development actors, the private sector and other humanitarian partners to discuss current and emerging humanitarian challenges and priority themes and share experiences and lessons learned and promote coordinated responses.
- ◇ Preparations are also underway for the [2021 ECOSOC Integration Segment](#), which will be convened on 2 July 2021. The Integration Segment, to be chaired by His Excellency Ambassador Juan Sandoval Mendiola, Vice-President of ECOSOC (Mexico), will discuss the combined UN system's analysis and policy proposals on the 2021 theme of ECOSOC and HLPF. As part of the preparatory process of the Integration Segment, the Vice-President of ECOSOC is organizing three "Integration Dialogues" to identify the key policy options to inform the deliberations at the Segment, and critical guidance on integration issues that need to be addressed. The dialogues focus on the most creative ideas emanating from the work of ECOSOC subsidiary bodies and the UN system to break new ground in the reflection on how to recover better from COVID-19.
- ◇ Preparations continue to be made for the upcoming [High-level Political Forum \(HLPF\)](#) taking place on 6-15 July 2021 under the auspices of ECOSOC. This year's theme is: "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." This year, 44 countries are expected to present their Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs) at the HLPF – with an aim to share experiences with the global community, on efforts to address the impact of COVID-19, their lessons learned, and their recovery strategy in the context of implementing the sustainable development agenda.
- ◇ The High-level Segment of ECOSOC will take place on 16 July 2021. The Segment will focus on the commemoration of the 75th Anniversary of ECOSOC, multilateralism and their role to help to recover from the COVID-19 and advance the 2030 Agenda.

ECOSOC OFFICIAL MEETINGS AND SPECIAL EVENTS

ECOSOC Meetings and Special Events



The [10th Anniversary of the Economic and Social Council \(ECOSOC\) Youth Forum](#), took place virtually on 7-8 April 2021. The Forum has become an important global platform for young people to engage with the United Nations, attracting an unprecedented level of attendance and participation of a record number of Ministers as well as influential youth leaders. Close to 19,000 participants, with more than 400 Government representatives attended the Forum.

The progress report of the United Nations system-wide youth strategy was presented. It highlights how the United Nations is responding to the needs of youth in the COVID-19 crisis and how it is working with Governments and young people to realize the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), among other key findings.

Youth representatives and government delegations engaged in a series of plenary and breakout dialogues through the prism of COVID-19 response and recovery, focusing on the nine SDGs (1, 2, 3, 8, 10, 12, 13, 16 and 17) that will be discussed by the High-level Political Forum (HLPF) in July 2021. These discussions showed that young people are impacted by COVID-19 but that many are stepping-up to advance the 2030 Agenda, advocate for the SDGs, support its implementation and hold Governments accountable. It emerged that in the context of COVID-19, there is a strong need for accelerated action on climate, decent work and economic growth, reduced inequalities, while increasing partnerships across the globe.



During [12-15 April 2021](#), the Forum on Financing for Development was held in a hybrid format, Ministers and high-level representatives expressed their resolve to continue to scale up efforts towards the full and timely implementation of the Addis Ababa Action Agenda of the Third International Conference on Financing for Development. Furthermore, they reaffirmed their commitment to strengthening multilateral cooperation and solidarity to combat the

consequences of the pandemic. Participants recognized that recovery strategies out of the crisis need to be designed to accelerate the implementation of the 2030 Agenda in the decade of action, building a sustainable and inclusive economy, as well as helping to reduce the risk of future shocks. The release of the highly substantive outcome document of the forum summarizes these considerations and will be transmitted by the Economic and Social Council to the High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable development under the auspices of the Council as part of the procedural report of the 2021 ECOSOC Forum on Financing for Development follow up.

ECOSOC President Munir Akram [noted](#) the most pressing financial needs arising from the recent pandemic and “that the global recovery from the COVID pandemic must be undertaken urgently and

comprehensively and should restore us on the path of sustainable development towards the SDGs, the Paris climate goals, and other goals that we have all endorsed. And unless we are not able to make this transition from recovery to development in a way that does not exacerbate the divergences between countries and within countries, we could see a grave international crisis facing the international community.”



Latest developments on the issue of vaccine equity were at the top of the Economic and Social Council’s agenda on 16 April 2021. [The Special Meeting of the Council on “A Vaccine for All”](#) revealed deep concerns about vaccine nationalism and restrictions on exports, intellectual property rights, lack of resources and capacities. In his opening remarks, the ECOSOC President [underscored](#) the urgency to ramp up production, address the issues of intellectual property, funding gap of the ACT accelerator and its COVAX facility and export restrictions, as well as

vaccine nationalism so as to overcome the deep inequalities between rich and poor countries in access to the vaccine.

Many developing countries called for introducing flexibility under the Agreement on Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS). There were also clear asks for the private sector to share know-how and intellectual property with qualified manufacturers, particularly in developing countries. The ACT Accelerator and COVAX facility must be fully funded. A clear message from the meeting was also that the response to the pandemic provides an opportunity to strengthen health systems and advance towards universal health coverage. This would help countries be better prepared and become more resilient against future pandemics.

2021 ECOSOC Special Event on SIDS, LDCs and LLDCs

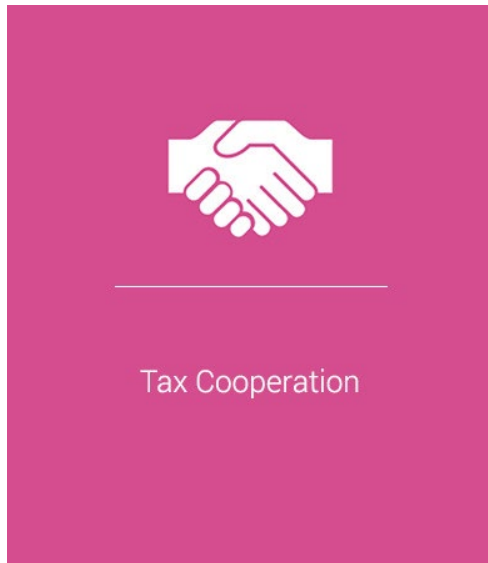


On Friday 23 April 2021, the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) held a virtual special event on [Small Island Developing States \(SIDS\), Least Developed Countries \(LDCs\) and Landlocked Developing Countries \(LLDCs\)](#). This group of countries in special circumstances are at a critical juncture on their path to sustainable development and the achievement of the 2030 Agenda. They have been the hardest hit by the COVID-19 pandemic with a dramatic setback in their progress

towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Discussions centered on urgent decisive actions to secure a sustainable and resilient recovery under two panels: 1. Understanding the vulnerability of Small Island Developing States (SIDS)- impact of COVID-19 and road to recovery; 2. Financing a resilient recovery from the cascading effects of COVID-19 in LDCs and LLDCs.

The Prime Ministers of Antigua and Barbuda (Chairman of AOSIS), Barbados and Cabo Verde as well as the Attorney-General and Minister for Economy, Public Enterprises, Civil Service, Communications and Minister responsible for Climate Change of Fiji and the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Malawi shared their views during the meeting.





On 29 April May 2021, the President of ECOSOC convened virtually the [2021 ECOSOC Special Meeting on International Cooperation in Tax Matters](#), to review recent developments on the role of taxation to promote sustainable development and ultimately to help ensure that inclusive and effective tax policies become part and parcel of the Decade of Action to deliver the SDGs. Discussion focused on how countries can use tax policy and administration in tackling some of our most pressing social, economic and environmental challenges – in an increasingly digitalized economy and in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. The meeting addressed emerging issues of tax policy and administration related to (i) taxation and inequality, (ii) environmental taxation, and (iii) taxation and financing for health systems. The special meeting was held immediately following the 22nd Session of the UN Committee

of Experts on International Cooperation in Tax Matters (UN Tax Committee, 19-23 and 26-28 April 2021), and provided an important opportunity to facilitate discussion between the Committee and the development community, including members and observers of ECOSOC, senior representatives of national tax authorities, relevant international and regional organizations, as well as civil society and academia.

ECOSOC President Munir Akram identified three urgent areas for action in the international tax sphere: (i) multilateralism is key, on the backdrop of the current multidimensional health and socioeconomic crisis that has reversed hard-won development gains; (ii) the climate crisis and the pandemic of inequality call for decisive action in shifting the tax burden from consumers to polluters, and to establish more equitable systems within and among countries; (iii) international cooperation on tax policy and administration, led by the UN Tax Committee, will help developing countries mobilize the domestic resources to invest in an effective health response and recovery, including large-scale immunization around the world.



On 3 May, the 2021 ECOSOC Partnership Forum was held virtually under the theme of [“Partnerships as Game Changer for a Sustainable Recovery from COVID-19.”](#) Underpinned by a vision of solidarity, representatives from governments and non-state actors discussed how effective multi-stakeholder partnerships can help drive a sustainable recovery from COVID-19, while recognizing the crosscutting importance of partnerships in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals.

In his [welcoming remarks](#), H.E. Mr. Munir Akram, President of ECOSOC, made a strong call for raising the ambition for global partnership and solidarity against the backdrop of worsening inequalities within and amongst countries as a result of the global pandemic. He highlighted the critical roles of partnerships in mobilizing investments in sustainable infrastructure, including from the private sector, as well as in closing the digital divide, strengthening social protection, and reforming trade and tax systems.



Convened by the President of ECOSOC and co-chaired by H.E. Mr. Andrejs Pildegovičs, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Latvia to the United Nations, and H.E. Mr. Mohammad Koba, Ambassador and Charge d’Affaires of the Indonesia Mission to the United Nations, the [6th Annual Multi-stakeholder Forum on Science, Technology and the SDGs, \(the “STI Forum”\)](#) was successfully held in a fully virtual format over 4-5 May 2021. This year’s theme was “Science, technology and

innovation for a sustainable and resilient COVID-19 recovery, and effective pathways of inclusive action towards the Sustainable Development Goals,” The opening featured remarks by the ECOSOC President, the President of General Assembly and the UN Secretary-General. In all, the Forum comprised two days of ministerial and thematic sessions, all in plenary, as well as a virtual exhibition (featuring winners of a UN innovation competition) and 33 side events. Discussions highlighted the inequalities and gaps across countries and how international cooperation can help address them. The potential for the Technology Facilitation Mechanism to strengthen national capacities and promote access of women and girls to STI was stressed.

ECOSOC President Munir Akram [stated](#) that discussions “connect science, technology and innovation to the COVID-19 response and recovery, while forging an inclusive path towards the SDGs”. He highlighted three concrete steps forward, including “to expand the Technology Facilitation Mechanism online platform, 2030 Connect, to develop a database on open-source technologies available to all.”



From 6-7 May 2021, the [7th biennial High-level Meeting](#) of the Development Cooperation Forum (DCF) was convened virtually by the President of ECOSOC to review the latest trends, progress, and challenges in international development cooperation. The 2021 DCF focused on advancing development cooperation that reduces risks, enables recovery and builds resilience in the COVID-19 period and beyond. A Forum and core function of ECOSOC, the DCF is the principal platform for global policy dialogue on development cooperation. It brought together policy-makers, practitioners and experts from Government, research and academia, civil society, philanthropy and women- and youth-led organizations, among others. Its outcome—an official summary by the President—will inform

the 2021 HLPF and will help to shape the role of development cooperation in the Decade of Action for the SDGs.

ECOSOC President Munir Akram [identified](#) four priorities for intensifying development cooperation amidst “the worst health, economic and social crisis since the Second World War”: (i) to ensure that the Covid-19 vaccines are made available to everyone, everywhere, as soon as possible, (ii) to strengthen financing for sustainable development, (iii) to mobilize massive investments in resilient infrastructure, and (iv) to expand productive capacities of developing countries and transition to more inclusive and sustainable economies.



From 18-20 May, the ECOSOC Operational Activities for Development Segment convened virtually under the theme [“Amplifying the United Nations development system’s impact on support of the Decade of Action”](#). This was the first segment after the adoption in December 2020 of the new quadrennial comprehensive policy review (QCPR) which will guide the way the UNDS supports programme countries in their development efforts in the next four years. The Segment, chaired by

the ECOSOC Vice President, Ambassador Sergiy Kyslytsya, brought together, in interactive discussions, high level representatives of the United Nations, including the Secretary-General and Deputy Secretary-General, Executive Heads of UN entities, Resident Coordinators and UN Country Teams (UNCT) members, International Financial Institutions (IFIs) as well as Member States.

UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres [stressed](#) that “If we are making progress, it is because we can now count on a strengthened coordination function”. ECOSOC President Munir Akram, who chaired the opening session, [stated](#) that the reformed UN Development System (UNDS) is working, as demonstrated in its response to the COVID-19 crisis. However, the challenges ahead are imposing given that a decade of development gains has been wiped out in most developing countries. He stressed the need for developing countries now to focus even more on eradication of poverty and hunger, building social safety nets for the poor and most vulnerable, as well as mobilizing the financing required to respond to the pandemic and to build back towards the achievement of the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals.

ECOSOC Subsidiary Bodies



The [52nd session](#) of the Statistical Commission took place from 1-3 and 5 March 2021 in a virtual format. The Commission brought together delegates from 135 countries and 54 agencies. Over 60 side events were held. The Commission discussed 29 official documents, with 34 supporting background documents, and over 500 written statements on all agenda

items were submitted to the Commission. Substantive discussions focused on diverse topics, including on data and indicators for the 2030 Agenda, on economic statistics, and on the system of environmental-economic accounting (SEEA). All of these formed the basis of the 17 draft decisions adopted by the Commission, including the adoption of the [System of Environmental-Economic Accounting—Ecosystem Accounting \(SEEA EA\)](#), which represents a significant step towards going beyond GDP and ensuring natural capital is also recognized in economic reporting.



The [65th session](#) of the Commission on the Status of Women, held from 15-26 March, focused on the priority theme: “Women’s full and effective participation and decision-making in public life, as well as the elimination of violence, for achieving gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls.” The session

resulted in the adoption by Member States of Agreed Conclusions, which recognized the need to

significantly accelerate the pace of progress to ensure women’s full participation and leadership across all branches of government and the public sector. It also recognized that temporary special measures, such as quotas, and increased political will were needed as enabling pathways to this goal. Other recommendations included measures to eliminate, prevent and respond to all forms of violence against women and girls in public and private spaces, end impunity of perpetrators, and support victims and survivors’ full recovery.

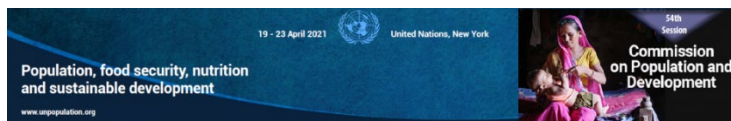
In his statement delivered at the opening of the session, the President of ECOSOC observed that “both developed and developing countries faced challenges in promoting gender equality. For ensuring women’s meaningful participation and eliminating violence against them, the international community needs a new Global Compact for Women’s Empowerment based on an action plan for mainstreaming women’s participation in decision-making in public life and proposing concrete measures to eliminate all forms of violence against women and girls.”



The [64th session](#) of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs (CND) started on 12 April 2021 with the commemoration of the 60th anniversary of the 1961 Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs and the

50th anniversary of the 1971 Convention on Psychotropic Substances, and a call by the Secretary-General for solidarity, shared responsibility, and international cooperation to improve health coverage, protect societies and recover better from the COVID-19 pandemic. The Commission adopted by consensus a joint statement on the impact of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic on the implementation of Member States’ joint commitments to address and counter all aspects of the world drug problem, which was also submitted to the ECOSOC President Munir Akram as substantive contribution to the 2021 HLPF. The statement expressed grave concern about the devastating impact of the pandemic across the world and urged Member States to ensure that no one affected by the world drug problem was left behind in the health response to the COVID-19 pandemic and in efforts to mitigate the drug-related consequences of the pandemic.

The sixty-fourth CND adopted four resolutions, covering a wide range of topics, including ensuring access to treatment, rehabilitation, and social reintegration services; alternative development; scientific evidence-based prevention and treatment; and responses to the non-medical use of pharmaceuticals. ECOSOC President Munir Akram [highlighted](#) that “the Covid-19 pandemic had intensified the drug problem, heightening drug use and impairing the ability of health and social systems to cope with the drug crisis”, and recalled that “the world drug problem could only be most effectively addressed in a multilateral context, relying on an integrated, balanced and comprehensive approach, promoting and protecting health, safety and well-being of all in accordance with 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda.”



The [54th session](#) of the Commission on Population and Development took place from 19 to 23 April 2021 in hybrid format. The Commission adopted, by consensus,

a substantive outcome document on its main theme, “Population, food security, nutrition and sustainable development”. The session also discussed the contributions of the implementation of the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) to the achievement of the SDGs on ending poverty and hunger, improving health, achieving gender equality, ensuring responsible consumption and production, and urgently taking climate action, among others. The discussions of the Commission will also contribute to the preparations for the Food Systems Summit, to be convened by the Secretary-General in September 2021.



The UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues held its 20th session from 19-30 April under the theme of [“Peace, justice and strong institutions: the role of indigenous peoples in implementing Sustainable Development Goal 16.”](#) The Forum stressed that it was vital that Governments recognize indigenous peoples’ institutions, especially their representative institutions. These

institutions helped promote and protect the cultures, livelihoods, identities and languages of indigenous peoples and other essential elements of their lives. These institutions should be supported and strengthened as essential elements of diverse and multicultural States.

The Vice-President of ECOSOC, H.E. Ambassador Juan Sandoval Mendiola of Mexico addressed the opening of the session by stressing that the pandemic impacted and affected indigenous peoples in a wide spectrum of areas that required a broad response. The 2030 Agenda and the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples were key instruments that should serve as a guide to recover from the pandemic and its associated consequences.



The [22nd session](#) of the Committee of Experts on International Cooperation in Tax Matters was held virtually from 19 – 23 and 26 – 28 April 2021. This was the final session of the current membership of the Committee, concluding its ambitious work programme for the 2017-2021 period. During the 22nd session,

the Committee had focused discussions and advanced its work on tax consequences of the digitalized economy; approved a final draft chapter, and along with it, the full text of the Handbook on Dispute Avoidance and Resolution and agreed that a reference to the Handbook should be included in the United Nations Model Double Taxation Convention between Developed and Developing Countries; finalized the Update of the Handbook on Selected Issues for Taxation or the Extractive Industries by Developing Countries; completed its work on Environmental issues, a topic that was included for the first time in the work of the Tax Committee with this membership; launched the 3rd edition of the United Nations Practical Manual on Transfer Pricing for Developing Countries; officially launched the United Nations Guidelines on the Tax Treatment of Government-to-Government Aid Projects; and finalized the Update of the UN Model Double Taxation Convention between Developed and Developing Countries.



Join us at **UNFF 16**
live on UN Web TV
<http://webtv.un.org/>



The [16th session](#) of the United Nations Forum on Forests (UNFF16) was held from 26 to 29 April 2021 in a virtual format. The session brought together representatives from Member States, international and regional organizations, and stakeholders who took part in technical discussions on the implementation of the UN Strategic Plan for Forests (UNSPF) 2030 and to take stock of its progress. The main outcome

document from the technical session was its Chair’s summary which included proposals for consideration at the UNFF’s policy session in 2022. The summary also contained the UNFF’s input to the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF) in 2021. An additional outcome was consideration and adoption of the UNFF programme of work of for the period 2022-2024.

The session also featured a high-level roundtable on major forest related developments. The important role of forests in helping to overcome many of the ongoing health, climate and inequality issues was highlighted. In his remarks during the high-level roundtable, the ECOSOC President [noted](#) that the world priority must be to end poverty and hunger while also safeguarding our planet. He underscored the need to support a sustainable, inclusive and resilient model for global recovery.



The [24th session](#) of the Commission on Science and Technology for Development (CSTD) was held from 17 to 21 May in a virtual format and addressed two priority themes: (1) “Using STI to close the gap on SDG 3, good health and well-being”; and (2) “Harnessing blockchain for sustainable development: prospects and challenges”. The Commission also discussed the role of science, technology, and innovation in a sustainable and resilient recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic, and reviewed

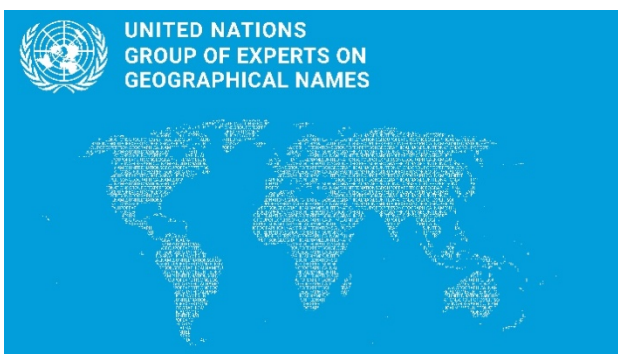
progress made in the implementation of and follow-up to the outcomes of the World Summit on the Information Society at the regional and international level.



From 17-21 May, the [30th session](#) of the Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice (CCPCJ) convened with the priority theme of “effective measures to prevent and counter the smuggling of migrants, while protecting the rights of smuggled migrants, particularly women and children, and those of unaccompanied migrant children.” The session opened with a

high-level ceremonial segment to celebrate the 30th anniversary of the Commission, as one of the key functional commissions of the ECOSOC. During the session, the CCPCJ also followed up on the Kyoto Declaration, the outcome of the 14th UN Congress on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice, setting international priorities in the field of crime prevention and criminal justice for the years to come, and contributing to join efforts to advance the rule of law and the timely achievement of the 2030 Agenda. The Commission adopted resolutions on combatting human trafficking and migrant smuggling; integrating sport into youth crime prevention; addressing crimes that affect the environment; reducing reoffending through rehabilitation and reintegration; and criminal justice system reform amidst the COVID-19 pandemic.

In his remarks during the ceremonial segment, ECOSOC President Munir Akram [highlighted](#) that “the COVID-19 pandemic had had particularly deleterious impact on crime prevention and criminal justice”, and that “lockdowns had enabled new illicit markets to thrive, presenting unique challenges to policing and preventing crime and ensuring justice.” The ECOSOC President concluded his statement stressing that the “the work of the Commission was more pertinent than ever, with advancing crime prevention and criminal justice as the key to a fairer COVID-19 response, and a critical factor to recover better from the crisis.



The [2nd session](#) of the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names (UNGEGN) provided a forum for experts to learn and share best practices and norms along with new tools for geographical names administration. The session also highlighted the Group's role as an enabler in preserving cultural heritage and where appropriate support relevant aspects of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The second session discussed papers from Austria, Canada, Indonesia, and Saudi Arabia which addressed the

theme “Geographical Names Supporting Sustainable Development and Management of the Pandemic.” This theme supports General Assembly resolution 70/1, which called for ECOSOC's inter-governmental

bodies and forums to reflect the integrated nature of the sustainable development goals (SDGs) as well as the interlinkages between them.



The Committee of Experts on Public Administration (CEPA) held its [20th session](#) from 12 to 21 April in virtual format under the theme “Building inclusive, effective and resilient institutions for sustainable recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic and timely

implementation of the SDGs”. One of the key messages of the Committee was that recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic and implementation of the SDGs are not sequential or separate. Achieving sustainable development and strengthening resilience require a long-term perspective in policymaking together with institution-building at all levels, based on principles of effective governance for sustainable development, and a steadfast commitment to promoting peaceful, just and inclusive societies. The national budgets need to be aligned with the SDGs, which in most cases requires that the budgets be reorganized around programs and activities. The Committee discussed the accelerated trend of digitalization and flexible work in the public sector caused by the pandemic as well as the fact that the pandemic will likely exacerbate existing challenges in conflict-affected countries and increase pressure on already struggling institutions, which require proactive leadership of governments for provision of health care, economic support, and the development of vaccines, as well as for peacebuilding.

REGIONAL COMMISSIONS

2021 Regional Forums for Sustainable Development (RFSDs)

Highlights of the main messages from the regional forums on sustainable development can be found at: [RFSDs Key Messages 2021 Final.pdf \(regionalcommissions.org\)](#)



The [7th Session](#) of the Africa Regional Forum on Sustainable Development took place virtually on 1-4 March 2021 on the theme, “Building forward better: towards a resilient and green Africa to achieve the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063.”

The Forum was held against the backdrop of the new challenge to global development posed by the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, which had exposed severe vulnerabilities and structural inequalities in Africa. Even before the pandemic,

Africa was already not on track, and in some cases regressing, in respect of attainment of the goals set out in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and Agenda 2063: the Africa We Want, of the African Union. The Forum therefore offered for a platform for dialogue and solutions to accelerate and expand the scale of implementation within the narrow window of the decade of action and delivery for sustainable development.



The [4th meeting](#) of the Forum of the Countries of Latin America and the Caribbean on Sustainable Development was chaired by Costa Rica and took

place virtually, from 15 to 18 March 2021. Government representatives reaffirmed the dire urgency of building fair, sustainable societies that would tackle inequality and guarantee citizenship and rights, and of acting together as a region to ensure access to vaccines for the entire population.

At the end of the Forum, participating delegates approved a document with 94 conclusions and recommendations that will be taken to the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development. They include calling upon the international community to reinforce measures aimed at addressing specific challenges that hindered achievement of some SDG targets by the year 2020, such as those to protect biodiversity, develop disaster risk reduction strategies, increase the availability of timely and disaggregated data, foster youth participation, and enhance financial resources, capacity-building, and technology transfer to developing countries.



The [5th session](#) of the Regional Forum on Sustainable Development for the UNECE Region took place virtually from 17 to 18 March 2021. The Forum was held under the theme “Sustainable and resilient recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic and action and delivery on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in the UNECE Region”, with a specific focus on Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 1, 2, 3, 8, 10, 12, 13 and the 2020 targets. Participants discussed concrete policy actions to accelerate SDG progress and spur the efforts to build back better.

Speakers concluded that the immediate response to the COVID-19 crisis should be complemented by a long-term approach that relies on trade and innovation and leverages public and private investment into infrastructure. There is also an opportunity to put tourism on a sustainable path. This requires measurable commitments by governments and policy coherence across the tourism value chain.



The [8th session](#) of the Asia-Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development took place virtually from 23 to 26 March 2021. With the theme, “Sustainable and resilient recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic in Asia and the Pacific,” the forum discussed how transformations can take place in the aftermath of COVID-19 while supporting a sustainable and resilient recovery.

In-depths review of SDGs 1, 2, 3, 8, 10, 12, 13, 16 and 17 were conducted without prejudice to the integrated, indivisible, and interlinked nature of the Sustainable Development Goals.

The Forum provided a regional perspective on the implementation of the 2030 Agenda by identifying regional trends and consolidating and sharing best practices and lessons learned. The Forum also took into consideration the contributions of United Nations system bodies (at the regional level), other regional and sub regional organizations, and relevant stakeholders.



The [7th session](#) of the Arab Forum for Sustainable Development convened under the theme, “Accelerating progress on the 2030 Agenda post-COVID” took place from 29 to 31 March 2021. It brought together high-level representatives of ministries, bodies concerned with planning and following up on the 2030 Agenda, parliamentarians, a wide range of regional and

international institutions, civil society organizations, the private sector, academic and research centres, and the media, among others to promote a participatory approach to the follow-up and review of the 2030 Agenda.

Speakers noted that SDG 16 is a critical goal for the region to recover from COVID-19 and achieve the SDGs. The forum called for the political commitment to end war and conflict, increase civic space, and link humanitarian aid and emergency response to long-term recovery. Addressing poverty and inequality and the shrinking of the middle class is also necessary for achieving inclusive recovery and implementing the SDGs. This requires redistributive policies, diversification of the economy and job creation. It also requires transforming and improving the educational system, enhancing inclusiveness, developing digital learning platforms as well as building the capacity of researchers and innovators as key elements in the region's efforts to achieve the SDGs.

Sessions of the Regional Commissions



The [53rd session](#) of the Economic Commission for Africa took place 17-23 March 2021 in a hybrid format. The session addressed current growth trajectories, which suggest that many countries will fail to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals by the 2030 deadline. To avoid these outcomes, a whole-of-society approach is needed along with concerted and ambitious efforts to transform our world during the 10-year window provided by the decade of action to deliver on the Goals.

Specific suggestions include aligning national development strategies with the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) process towards boosting intra-African trade, promoting industrialization and integration into the world economy. This alignment will enable countries to leverage the opportunities the Area offers to respond to and recover from COVID-19 crisis and build forward better. Also, investment and political commitment to make progress towards SDG 2 should be scaled up by focusing on three priority areas: linking rural actors to markets, enhancing financial services, and promoting innovation to transform rural areas.



The [69th session](#) of the Economic Commission for Europe was held 20-21 April 2021 with the theme, “Promoting circular economy and sustainable use of natural resources in the UNECE region.” The UNECE region leads the world in producing, value-adding

and transforming its natural resources for socio-economic consumption. However, these resources are often finite. Their production and consumption require enormous energy and other resource inputs, and lead to environmental degradation and increased vulnerability to climate change – effects that are compounded on the region's increasingly urbanized populations. Transitioning to a more circular economy and sustainable use of natural resources is crucial for achieving the SDGs.

Participants stressed that addressing the climate change and biodiversity crises demands a whole of society inter-generational approach. Sustainable consumption and production can drive an inclusive transition to a circular economy. A smart mix of regulations, standards, incentives, and information tools is central to foster behavioral change towards sustainable lifestyles.

77th COMMISSION SESSION

Building back better
in Asia and the Pacific

26-29 April 2021 | Bangkok, Thailand



The [77th session](#) of the Economic Commission for Asia and the Pacific was held 26-29 April 2021 virtually under the theme, “Building back better from crises through regional cooperation in Asia and the Pacific.” Ministers and delegates analyzed the socio-economic impacts of the pandemic in countries of Asia and the Pacific, took stock of action so far, and set out a policy agenda for building back better

grounded in regional cooperation and centered around four critical interconnected areas: broadening social protection, investing in a sustained recovery, strengthening connectivity and supply chains, and mending a broken relationship with nature.

ECOSOC President Munir Akram [noted](#) that to truly build back better, the structural barriers that hamper economic growth of developing countries must be addressed eventually, including inequitable trade, taxation and technology regimes, and unfair investment treaties.



The ECOSOC newsletter is produced by the [Office for Intergovernmental Support and Coordination for Sustainable Development](#) in the [UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs](#).