





## NEWSLETTER

Issue #5 – September - December 2020

### HIGHLIGHTS

-  ECOSOC is preparing for its 2021 session and meetings (More information: [Working arrangements for the 2021 session of ECOSOC](#); and [Sessions of the subsidiary and related bodies of ECOSOC](#)).
-  [H.E. Mr. Munir Akram](#), President of ECOSOC, will convene the meeting of the high-level political forum along with the meetings and segments of ECOSOC, 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”. He has three main priorities for his Presidency:
  - Financing the SDGs and COVID-19 recovery;
  - Investing in sustainable infrastructure; and
  - Harnessing science, technology and innovation for sustainable development.

### ECOSOC OFFICIAL MEETINGS



The Economic and Social Council and the General Assembly organized a joint High-level Informal meeting to commemorate the 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the World Summit for Social Development (WSSD) on 1 December 2020. Co-chairing this event, the President of ECOSOC, Ambassador Munir Akram [stressed](#) that “Without social development and economic growth, life would be fragile, unequal and ultimately purposeless”. He also stated that “Most of the SDGs reflect the objectives espoused by the World Summit on Social Development: No Poverty; Zero Hunger; Good Health;

Quality Education; Gender Equality; Clean Water, Sanitation; and Decent Work. The SDGs have added another indispensable element into the development paradigm; the imperative to ensure the sustainability of growth and to prevent degradation of the environment”.

WSSD adopted a [Declaration and Programme of Action](#) in March 1995, which represented a new consensus on the need to put people at the centre of development. The largest gathering of world leaders at the time with 117 heads of State or Government – pledged to make the conquest of poverty, the goal of full employment and the fostering of stable, safe and just societies their overriding objectives.



The annual [Joint meeting of the Economic and Social Council \(ECOSOC\) and the Peacebuilding Commission \(PBC\)](#) took place on 19 November 2020, under the theme “Fostering global solidarity and conflict-sensitive responses to the COVID-19 pandemic and its socio-economic impacts”. All speakers welcomed the joint meeting as a clear demonstration of cross-UN pillar collaboration in the areas of peace. They underscored the urgency of the response to COVID-19, especially in conflict-sensitive settings, such as in the Sahel. Member States expressed concern about the devastating socio-economic impacts of the pandemic, including the increase in poverty, food insecurity and inequalities.

They warned of a possible cascading effect that this might have in conflict-affected settings, where the pandemic exacerbated inequalities and vulnerabilities and complicated humanitarian, development and security efforts.

In his [opening remarks](#), ECOSOC President Munir Akram underscored that COVID-19 was the worst pandemic in a century; it therefore required greater understanding of its impact on the global economy and those with the least resources and weakest capacities. “Obviously, our first priority is to control and defeat the virus. Some countries have done well, and others not so well. The virus is still out of control. We must act together. And we must act with urgency. The proven method of masking up, social distancing and elementary hygiene precautions must be adhered to by all. No one is immune to the virus. No one will be safe until all are safe. And hopefully, we can display the discipline, until a vaccine comes to our rescue.”



A joint virtual meeting of the Second Committee with the Economic and Social Council on 14 October addressed the challenges of building sustainable infrastructure and mobilizing science and technology to respond to the global COVID-19 crisis and achieve the Sustainable Development Goals. It aimed notably to provide a deeper understanding on how building back better from the pandemic requires reconsideration of investing in infrastructure and investing in and mobilizing science and technology. Two panels of three speakers each addressed the question in an interactive debate with member States.

ECOSOC President Munir Akram [stressed](#) that “that finances which are required for recovery from the pandemic is the first test of the international response

that we need to enable developing countries to recover from this pandemic to avoid the trap of debt sustainability”.

Despite the setbacks caused by the spread of the disease, it will be essential to regain momentum and move ahead at an accelerated pace towards the achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The COVID-19 crisis has revealed some fundamental development flaws and the response can be converted into an opportunity to recover better, if much of resources aimed at recovering from the pandemic and its impacts are directed toward promoting the SDGs. Investing in sustainable infrastructure and leveraging science and technology in response to the pandemic will be important in moving forward to build back better and get back on track towards reaching the Goals.

## UN OFFICIAL MEETINGS



### HIGH-LEVEL POLITICAL FORUM ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

rights and civil and political rights, including the right to development”. The briefing was held in accordance with the Human Rights Council (HRC)’s resolution 37/25, which invites the President of ECOSOC to brief the HRC annually on “the discussions of the high-level political forum, including on gaps, challenges and progress in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, focusing on the means of implementation taken together as an integrated package”.

In his [address](#), the ECOSOC President underlined the mutually reinforcing linkages between sustainable development and the realization of all human rights. He noted that the Covid-19 pandemic has adversely affected the most vulnerable populations and that “its impacts are felt more harshly by those who suffer the consequences of systematic discrimination and inequality”. To strengthen efforts to address issues of inequality and human rights in the context of sustainable development, he announced his plan to convene a special meeting of ECOSOC in 2021 to commemorate the twentieth Anniversary of the Durban Conference against Racism and Inequality.



The President of ECOSOC, Ambassador Munir Akram, [addressed](#) the [meeting of the Security Council on: Contemporary Drivers of Conflict on 3 November 2020](#), at the invitation of the President of the Security Council.

The meeting focused on the concept of collective security as enshrined in article 55 of the UN Charter, and the authority the Security Council to create conditions of peace and stability, “ which are necessary for peaceful and friendly relations among nations based on respect for the principle of equal rights and self-determination of peoples”, as well Article 65 of the Charter that authorizes the Economic and Social Council to “... furnish information to the Security Council and [shall] assist the Security Council upon its request.”

Quoting United States President Franklin Delano Roosevelt, the ECOSOC President [emphasized](#) the essence of collective economic security – that is, the importance of joint efforts to stop the spread of economic “diseases” that are highly communicable and the fact that the economic health of every country contributes to a healthier global economy. He noted that seventy-five years since the UN Charter was adopted, the UN Member States have failed to live up to the ideals of collective and cooperative security. He recounted the many reasons for this failure, including, first, the divisions of the Cold War, which prevented universal and cooperative security; secondly, the rapid process of decolonization, which did not entirely eliminate the legacy and mentality of colonialism; and thirdly, and perhaps most important, the capture of state power, especially in the most powerful countries, by mercantilist interests that prioritized profits over the common good and the Charter’s vision of collective economic security.

The President made several recommendations in the areas of financing for development, including on addressing external debt and the need to redress the structural inequalities which led into the current and previous financial and economic crises.

The President underscored that ECOSOC would attempt to advance these essential actions in its Financing for Development (FFD) Forum next April and the High-Level Political Forum (HLPF) next July.



The General Assembly organized a special session in response to the COVID-19 Pandemic on 3 December 2020. The event stressed the importance of international cooperation and solidarity in responding to the pandemic. It underscored the importance of support to developing countries as a key area for the response to COVID-19. In that context, the President of ECOSOC, Ambassador Munir Akram, [reported](#) that more than 60 of these nations need “urgent financial help”, while five countries have defaulted on their debt payments.

“If there is an economic collapse or a humanitarian disaster in the developing countries, it will halt a global economic recovery, and the achievement of the SDGs will turn into a chimera”, he warned.



The [UN Summit on biodiversity](#) was convened by the President of the General Assembly on the theme, “Urgent action on biodiversity for sustainable development” on 30 September 2020. The Summit was also guided by the theme of the seventy-fifth anniversary of the United Nations, “The future we want, the United Nations we need: reaffirming our collective commitment to multilateralism”. The summit, which gathered more than seventy Heads of State and Government, demonstrated the strong commitment to undertaking urgent action at the highest levels to combat biodiversity loss, and to take urgent action in support of the post-2020 global biodiversity framework.

This framework will be adopted at the Fifteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity (COP 15), which will be held next year in Kunming, China. The new biodiversity framework will include updated targets and it will aim to contribute to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, and place the global community on a path towards realizing the goal of the 2050 Vision for Biodiversity, “Living in harmony with nature”. In his statement to the Summit, the President of ECOSOC, Ambassador Munir Akram urged member states “to transition to a new economic and social paradigm which values the preservation of nature as much if not more than gross natural product and per capita incomes, which enshrines sustainability as an integral part of the development paradigm”.



On 21 September 2020, the UN General Assembly organized a High-level meeting to commemorate the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the United Nations. ECOSOC President Munir Akram, referring to the three major challenges we are facing: “Recovering from COVID; realizing the SDGs; and avoiding the looming climate catastrophe”, [said](#) that “the response to these challenges must be collective. No one will be safe until everyone is safe from the virus”. Ambassador Akram called for international cooperation and solidarity. He emphasized that the “United Nations is more

indispensable today than before” and that “ECOSOC should take the decisions needed to overcome the triple challenges of today.

On 26 October 2020, the President of the General Assembly convened a commemorative event to celebrate UN Day. ECOSOC Vice-President Collen Kelapile delivered a [statement](#) on behalf of the ECOSOC President. He noted that “the COVID-19 pandemic is the greatest challenge we are facing as the international community since the creation of the UN. The response and recovery approaches need to be



based on robust and committed global solidarity and cooperation. They must be guided by the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Underlining that the Council has served as a central platform of the UN for promoting economic and social progress from the beginning, Ambassador Kelapile, said that the Council remains an essential pillar of multilateralism and urged member states to recommit to international solidarity and cooperation in responding to the COVID-19 pandemic and its devastating impacts.

The Presidents of the General Assembly and Security Council, the UN Secretary-General, and more than sixty representatives of Member States, Observer and non-member observer states, and international and regional organizations participated.

## EVENTS ORGANIZED BY THE UN SYSTEM



The implications of agri-food systems transformation for the livelihoods of rural people in the COVID-19 era was the focus of a high-level event, "Transforming agri-food systems and fostering inclusive rural development in the context of COVID-19 to end rural poverty" held virtually on the side-lines of the UN General Assembly's Special Session in response to the COVID-19 pandemic on 2 December 2020. The event was co-organized by FAO, IFAD, WFP, and the United Nations Department of

Economic and Social Affairs, in collaboration with the Permanent Mission of China and the Delegation of the European Union to the United Nations.

The President of ECOSOC, Ambassador Munir Akram, [stressed](#) that to combat hunger and reduce poverty, action is required at both the national and international level. He emphasized that "It is important that breakthroughs in new agricultural technologies to enhance food production; improve seed quality; and efficient water utilization are shared with developing countries on preferential terms".



On 24 September 2020, the High-Level Panel on International Financial Accountability, Transparency and Integrity for Achieving the 2030 Agenda (FACTI Panel) launched its interim report during a virtual high-level event which brought the FACTI Panel co-chairs with the Vice President of Nigeria, Prime Minister of Norway and Prime Minister of Pakistan. Closing remarks were made by the ECOSOC President and the President of the General Assembly. The FACTI Panel co-chairs highlighted the report's key message that there are gaps, vulnerabilities and impediments in the current international systems which hinder financial accountability, transparency and integrity. The Panel finds that the shortcomings are systemic and require systemic responses.

In [his remarks](#), ECOSOC President Munir Akram stressed the importance of the Panel's findings, particularly highlighting the need to strengthen the frameworks for the return of stolen assets, enhance inclusivity in global economic governance, and develop more coherent and equitable rules on tax collection and eliminate tax havens. He concluded by announcing his intention to bring the findings of the FACTI Panel into the work of Economic and Social Council, especially through the ECOSOC Forum on Financing for Development.



The United Nations Office of the Special Adviser on Africa and the Permanent Observer Mission of the African Union to the United Nations, in partnership with the Permanent Missions of South Africa and Nigeria to the United Nations, co-organized a high-level virtual meeting, “AU Silencing the Guns initiative - the role of illicit financial flows in fueling instability in Africa” on 10 December 2020.

## **SILENCING THE GUNS:**

Creating Conducive Conditions for Africa's Development

The high-level event, featuring Government representatives at the Ministerial level, focused on the impact of Illicit Financial Flows (IFFs) in exacerbating existing vulnerabilities in Africa. It will provide an opportunity to delve into the role of IFFs in fueling instability in the region, depriving countries of the region of important resources that could otherwise have been used to finance development, improve livelihoods and promote opportunities for economic participation, including for women and youth.

The President of ECOSOC, Ambassador Munir Akram, [said](#) that we must reverse the unequal investment in so many developing countries and set up a system for the adjudication of investment disputes. He also stressed that there is a need to have in place an international consensus to fight illicit financial flows, and to reverse the flow of resources from developing countries.



On Monday, 2 November 2020, the [Civil Society Meeting on “Financing for Development in the Era of COVID-19 and Beyond”](#) was held in a virtual setting. The meeting built on the High- Level Events on “Financing for Development in the Era of COVID-19 and Beyond”, convened by the Prime Ministers of Canada, Jamaica and the Secretary-General. It aimed to provide an open and inclusive space for dialogue with civil society and to explore pathways to better recover from the crisis triggered by COVID-19. Meeting participants focused on putting a human face on the

financing-related challenges exposed and magnified by the pandemic, including the intersections between systemic economic reforms and the challenges and demands of peoples and their communities.

The meeting featured messages by the Secretary General, the ECOSOC President, the Permanent Representatives of Canada and Jamaica and representatives from civil society organizations. In their remarks, civil society speakers issued a strong call for urgent action to expand fiscal and policy space in developing countries for the response, recovery and post-COVID economic transformation. Speakers highlighted the role of the United Nations in establishing a new global economic consensus to advance the agendas of human rights, gender equality, climate and sustainable development. To advance these objectives, civil society representatives reiterated their call for the need to hold a Summit to build the necessary momentum for systemic reform and socio-economic transformation aligned with the 2030 Agenda.

In his [message](#), ECOSOC President Munir Akram called for quick implementation of the actions outlined in the menu of policy options identified in the follow-up to the High-level event, including on debt sustainability, illicit financial flows, concessional financing, taxation and support to developing countries. The President of ECOSOC underlined the important role of civil society in advancing these actions and its vital contributions to advancing priorities on financing through ECOSOC fora, including the Financing for Development Forum and the Development Cooperation Forum.



The Permanent Mission of the Kingdom of Thailand and the Kingdom of Lesotho to the United Nations, together with the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations and the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification organized a special event to commemorate the World Soil Day on 7 December 2020.

This year's celebration's theme “Keep soil alive, protect soil biodiversity” aimed to raise awareness of the importance of maintaining healthy ecosystems and human well-being by addressing the growing challenges

in soil management, fighting soil biodiversity loss, increasing soil awareness, and encouraging governments, organizations, communities and individuals around the world to commit to proactively improving soil health.

The President of ECOSOC, Ambassador Munir Akram, [stressed](#) that “We must take transformative action for biodiversity, climate and people. Actions against biodiversity loss must be an integral part of the COVID-19 response”. “There is need to mobilize public and private financing to support a socio-economic recovery that embraces nature-based solutions and disaster risk reduction,” he stated.



On 29 October 2020, UN DESA [convened](#) the third event in its Global Policy Dialogue Series, a discussion on “Technological and Science-based Solutions to the COVID-19 Challenge.” The dialogue brought together global and regional experts in science, technology and innovation, including present and past members of the 10-member group supporting the Technology Facilitation Mechanism (created in the Addis Ababa Action Agenda and launched in the 2030 Agenda), academia and the UN system. Panelists assessed the science-based policies and innovations that have developed during the pandemic, identifying good practices from Member States, the WFP and WHO, as well as areas where work is still needed to leave no one behind. ECOSOC President Munir Akram, who will convene the 2021 Science, Technology and Innovation Forum, said in his opening remarks that if we are to recover better after the COVID-19 pandemic and achieve the SDGs and climate goals, “the application and absorption of new technologies in the development paradigm is indispensable. Indeed, it is imperative.”



The [Internet Governance Forum 2020](#) took place between 2-17 November 2020. Due to the required physical distancing to contain the spread of COVID-19, large portions of the world have turned to the Internet: for work, social and cultural activities, collecting and sharing data about the virus, and education. With record participation of over 6,000 participants from 173 countries through virtual means, the Forum provided an opportunity to discuss building a people-centered Internet and unleashing the power of digital technologies as a true equalizer and enabler. The two-week event featured discussions on a

number of topics, including the world’s increased reliance on the Internet during the pandemic, as well as long-standing inequities such as various forms of digital divides and gender inequality, exacerbated by the pandemic.

During the event, the Forum participants addressed the thematic issues of data, inclusion, environment and trust, among others. They underlined the importance of global unity in achieving inclusive, meaningful access for everyone and bridging digital divides. Online safety and security were also central to the Forum discussions, especially in the face of growing cyber-attacks. In his [remarks](#), ECOSOC President Munir Akram also highlighted the problems facing the global Internet community. With regard to challenges, “It is essential to address some of the policies and issues relating to the big technology companies, including tax policies, transfer pricing, free and fair trade, cyber security and cybercrimes, as well as the propagation of violence and hate over the internet,” the ECOSOC President said.



On 14 October 2020, the UN Secretary-General convened the Second Annual Meeting of the [Global Investors for Sustainable Development \(GISD\) Alliance](#), which was created in October 2019. The co-chairs of the GISD Alliance (CEOs of the Johannesburg Stock Exchange and Allianz) stressed that the GISD will focus its future work on newly agreed deliverables, including the development of new investment platforms and steps to shift the incentives and habits of key actors along the investment chain towards a longer term, sustainable perspective. ECOSOC President Munir Akram [emphasized](#) that international solidarity is critical to respond to the crises of COVID-19, climate change and

the backsliding on the SDGs, including the upscaling of private investment. He also stressed that the “UN provides a useful umbrella for the GISD Alliance to ensure that all developing countries will be included in the formulation of strategies and the identification of projects to catalyse investment for sustainable development”.



On 16 October 2020, the United Nations celebrated the World Food Day and the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Food and Agriculture Organization. ECOSOC President Munir Akram [said](#) that “This year’s Nobel Peace Prize could not have come at a better time to stress that peace is not possible without food security”. Ambassador Akram called on the international community to: (1) ensure that food supply chains are not disrupted during the COVID-19 crisis; (2) invest in sustainable agriculture-related infrastructure; (3) engage in trade for ensuring the availability of food and stability in food prices; (4) utilize sustainable

agriculture technologies in developing countries; and (5) engage in agriculture reform and protect it.



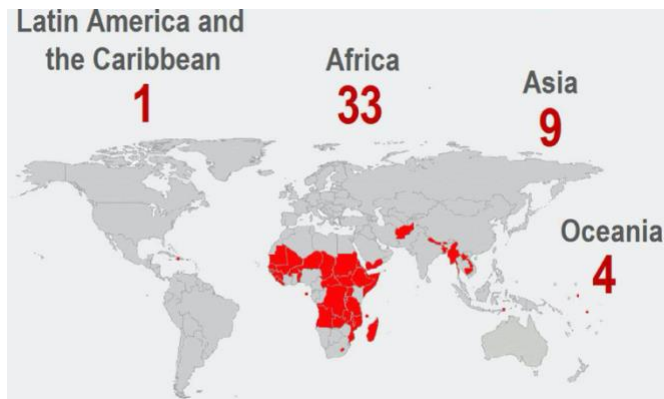
The UN Forum on Forests Secretariat organized a webinar, “Forest at the heart of a green recovery from COVID-19” on 28 September 2020. The webinar provided a timely opportunity to showcase the interlinkages between achieving the Global Forest Goals and delivering the SDGs during the Decade of Action, as well as the significance of forests to the post-2020 global biodiversity framework and climate change agenda. ECOSOC President Munir Akram [stressed](#) the importance of stopping deforestation and provided solutions for reforestation. He also addressed the issues of finance, science and technology as areas which could benefit to forest and agricultural problems.



The first ‘SDG Moment,’ convened by the UN Secretary-General, was held virtually on Friday, 18 September, before the opening of the General Assembly. Amidst the COVID-19 crisis, the SDG Moment underscored the urgency of realizing the SDGs for a healthier, more equitable and peaceful world, including through the response to COVID-19. It brought together representatives of Government, civil society, local authorities, international organizations and the private sector, along with other relevant stakeholders, to generate a renewed sense of urgency, ambition,

accountability and transformative possibility as the world embarks on the Decade of Action and Delivery for sustainable development while leaving no one behind. During the SDG Moment, ECOSOC President Munir Akram [said](#) that his “own priorities as president of the Economic and Social Council is to focus on practical actions,” he said, in outlining of the importance he attaches to financing, building sustainable infrastructure, and mobilizing science and technology. He also reminded delegations that he has proposed the establishment of an infrastructure investment facility as a public private partnership to accelerate sustainable infrastructure development in the developing countries.





The Annual Ministerial Meeting of the Group of Friends of the Least Developed Countries (LDCs) took place on 17 September 2020. The Group of Friends of LDCs advocates and mobilizes support around challenges faced by the LDCs. In the dialogue with the Friends of LDCs, the President of ECOSOC, Ambassador Munir Akram, [expressed](#) concern that COVID-19 is deepening the vulnerability of these countries that are already finding it difficult to respond adequately to external shocks. He cautioned that the pandemic threatens to undo progress achieved towards sustainable

development by the LDCs over recent decades.



A virtual ministerial event commemorating 20 years of the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime (UNTOC) and its Protocols took place on 13 November 2020. The President of ECOSOC, Ambassador Munir Akram, [stressed](#) that “organized crime and illicit financial flows remain a chronic and ubiquitous problem for many developed and developing countries”. He emphasized the impact of COVID-19 on transnational organized crime by mentioning the trafficking of counterfeit medical products. He called on Member States to “strengthen their coordination and

cooperation to effectively prevent, investigate and prosecute transnational organized crime, within the framework provided by the Palermo Convention”.

The ECOSOC President also said that the Conference of the State Parties of UNTOC, with technical assistance from the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), should focus primarily on the need to criminalize corruption and laundering of proceeds of crime; act on environmental crimes and the ever-growing illegal trade in wildlife; change in labor and migration laws; and stop illicit financial flows in developing countries.

He stressed that the “COVID-19 crisis must not become an accelerator for criminal activity”, and we need “to stop criminals from compromising the world’s COVID response and recovery and the realization of the SDGs”.

## OTHER EVENTS



On 29 September 2020, the Prime Ministers of Canada and Jamaica, and the UN Secretary-General jointly convened the High-level Event on Financing for Development in the Era of COVID-19 and Beyond. The event covered the areas of external finance and remittances, jobs and inclusive growth, recovering better for sustainability, global liquidity and financial stability, debt vulnerability, private sector creditors engagement and illicit financial flows.

At the meeting, Heads of States and Governments and representatives of international organizations called for urgent and bold action to avoid a looming humanitarian and development crisis and to ensure that gains towards the Sustainable Development Goals are not lost. Many highlighted the need to focus on both immediate financing needs for a quick recovery in the short-term and on putting the world on a path towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals, strengthening resilience and fostering a green, inclusive, just and sustainable world economy in the long run. In his remarks, ECOSOC President Munir Akram [underscored](#) the need for concrete measures to address the disproportionate challenges faced by

developing countries, including the need for comprehensive measures to address debt vulnerabilities, tackle illicit financial flows, safeguard financial liquidity and invest in sustainable infrastructure.



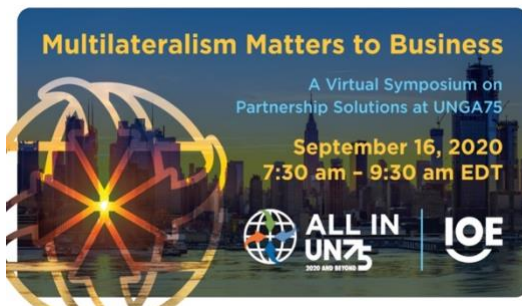
Members of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) organized a virtual dialogue on 28 September. In his statement, ECOSOC President Munir Akram [presented](#) his vision for the year (with finance, sustainable infrastructure, and science and technology to be pursued as part of the support to ECOSOC and the HLPF), and invited members of CARICOM to participate in the work of the UN and ECOSOC. He stressed that “COVID-19, climate and SDG challenges require short, medium and long term-actions”. He emphasized that in the “Financing for Development Forum we can explore how to scale up financing to respond to the pandemic, and investing in disaster risk reduction, mitigation and adaption, resilient infrastructures, and epidemic and pandemic prevention”. He also briefed the Group on the Development Cooperation Forum, issues related to taxation, digitalization, and the proposal for a public private partnership in infrastructure. Ambassador Akram encouraged CARICOM members to participate in the Voluntary National Reviews of the High-level Political Forum, and the ECOSOC Operational Activities Segment.



The [annual meeting of the Assembly of Parties of the International Development Law Organization \(IDLO\)](#) was organized on 24 November 2020. The event addressed the strategic plan of IDLO for 2021-2024, and also focused on the importance of justice and rule of law in the context of COVID-19 response and recovery efforts. Respecting and protecting human rights in accessing health and social services is key to

build back better.

The President of ECOSOC, Ambassador Munir Akram, stressed that the “rule of law and the justice sector are concrete enablers of the response to and recovery from COVID-19”. In the context of the global response to COVID-19, the President of ECOSOC said that IDLO’s strategic plan should address issues such as climate justice, technology transfers, licensing of intellectual property, anti-corruption, and supporting developing countries. He also proposed that IDLO should help strengthening domestic and international laws and regulations to prevent illicit financial flows.



ECOSOC President Munir Akram [delivered](#) opening remarks at the Virtual Symposium organized by International Organization of Employers and the United States Council for International Business (USCIB), “Multilateralism Matters to Business”, held on 16 September 2020. The President highlighted the importance of inclusive multilateralism that is open to the voices of all stakeholders, including the private sector. As the President of the Council, he stressed his commitment to continue to engage countries and stakeholders across key sectors to share early evidence and solutions and help step up

coordinated recovery efforts from the COVID-19 pandemic – with special emphasis on supporting national and demand-driven efforts to achieve the full ambition of the 2030 Agenda and Addis Ababa Action Agenda.



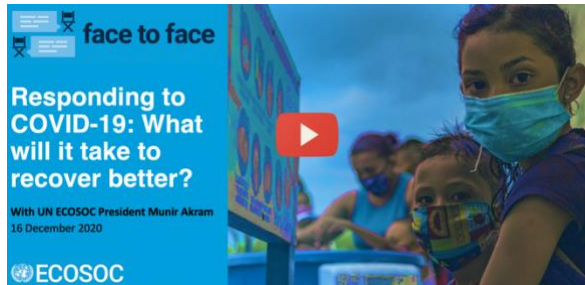
ECOSOC President Munir Akram participated in a virtual interactive dialogue with the Permanent representatives of the Pacific Small Island Developing States (PSIDS) on 11 September 2020. As part of his statement, Ambassador Akram [addressed](#) the current challenges PSIDS are facing in the context of COVID-19, among them, the economic impact of lockdowns, disruption in supply chains, and disruption in tourism and air travel. He also highlighted the importance of the expansion of the coverage of the Debt Service Suspension Initiative (DSSI) of G20, reallocation of Special Drawing Rights (SDR)

to PSIDS, digital economy, as well as his initiative to launch an infrastructure public private partnership facility.



On 10 September 2020, a virtual high-level event, “Pathways toward the SDGs through South-South solidarity beyond COVID-19” was organized to commemorate the United Nations Day for South-South Cooperation. In the context of COVID-19. Participants reflected on the role of South-South and triangular cooperation as an important element of their strategies. ECOSOC President Munir Akram [stressed](#) that for the future, “the achievement of the SDGs is unlikely without the contribution of the developing countries and without South-South cooperation”.

## COMMUNICATION



The President of ECOSOC, Ambassador Munir Akram hosted an end-of-year press briefing, “[Face to Face](#)”, on the COVID-19 pandemic on 16 December 2020. The President of ECOSOC presented his views and vision ([Video](#); [Full transcript](#); [News](#)) on how ECOSOC as one of the Charter organs of the United Nations could respond to the pandemic. He focused on COVID-19 through Financing; investing in sustainable infrastructure; and harnessing science, technology and innovation. He also announced the launch of an

infrastructure investment facility as a public private partnership to accelerate sustainable infrastructure development in developing countries.



The President of ECOSOC, Ambassador Munir Akram, was interviewed by the UN News Center on 1 December 2020. In the [interview](#), Ambassador Akram said that he believes that under the current global challenges that we face, the United Nations, including ECOSOC, is vital to promote global peace and cooperation. “We need to take urgent actions to meet the needs of the developing countries, otherwise, we will have a humanitarian disaster on our hands”, he said. Regarding the COVID-19 Pandemic, the President of ECOSOC stressed that the “developing countries need between two to three trillion dollars to revive their economies, and they have not had access to even a small fraction of that amount”.



The President of ECOSOC, Ambassador Munir Akram, was the guest at the Noon Briefing of the Spokesperson of the Secretary-General on 16 November 2020. The President [stressed](#) that it is an important year for ECOSOC due to the “COVID crisis and the impact that this has had on the global economy, facing the worst recession in a century apart from a pandemic that is out of control”. He focused on the fundamental aspects of Financing for Development, the intellectual property regime, infrastructure investment, and the digital divide. He stressed that “92% of all SDGs will be impacted by investment in infrastructure, energy, transportation,

housing, sanitation, water, etc. He stressed that the real change that we can bring in SDG achievement is going to be through infrastructure and infrastructure investment”.

# PUBLICATIONS



**COVID-19 is having a devastating impact on the SDGs. The Voluntary National Reviews show many measures countries are already putting in place, but global solidarity is needed to recover better. [Learn](#) what countries are doing to reduce the impact of the pandemic.**

