



# Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General  
1 May 2020

Original: English

---

## High-level political forum on sustainable development

Convened under the auspices of the Economic and Social Council

7–16 July 2020

Item 2 of the provisional agenda\*

**Accelerated action and transformative pathways: realizing the decade of action and delivery for sustainable development**

## **Discussion papers on the theme of the high-level political forum on sustainable development, submitted by major groups and other stakeholders**

### **Note by the Secretariat\*\***

The present document is a compilation of the executive summaries of the position papers on the theme of the high-level political forum, “Accelerated action and transformative pathways: realizing the decade of action and delivery for sustainable development”, submitted by the various major groups and other relevant stakeholders that have autonomously established and maintained effective coordination mechanisms for participation in the high-level political forum on sustainable development, in accordance with General Assembly resolution [67/290](#). The full reports are posted on the website of the forum: <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/hlpf/2020>.

---

\* [E/HLPF/2020/1](#).

\*\* The present document is a compilation of the executive summaries of the thematic papers submitted to the high-level political forum by the major groups and other stakeholders and does not necessarily reflect the views of the United Nations.



## I. Women

1. Even before the onset of the crisis caused by the coronavirus disease (COVID-19), the world faced mutually reinforcing crises: crises of inequality and environmental degradation, rising insecurity, protracted conflicts and growing fundamentalism, alongside outright attacks on multilateralism, participatory democracy, civil society and women defenders of the environment and human rights.

2. Women and girls in all their diversity are on the frontlines of the crisis, too, from the exponential increase in unpaid care work to loss of employment and livelihoods, especially given their overrepresentation in informal work, to the rise in all forms of violence, including gender-based and domestic violence, to the outright risk to their lives given their role as caregivers and health-care professionals, to the challenges of access to sexual and reproductive health and rights services. In addition, the possible rise in authoritarian measures taken by Governments and in power grabs by political leaders in the light of COVID-19 threatens all civil society and social justice movements.

3. These crises are unfolding globally against the backdrop of several important milestones with regard to the human rights of women and girls. The year 2020 marks the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, in which it was recognized that women's rights were human rights. It also marks the twentieth anniversary of Security Council resolution [1325 \(2000\)](#), which cemented the importance of women's participation in peace and security, and five years since the adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its Sustainable Development Goals, one of which was dedicated entirely to ending gender inequality.

4. In order not to lose the gains and the promises of the anniversaries being celebrated, feminist and women's movements globally must be resourced, protected and respected. Resourcing, protecting and respecting those movements is not only the right thing to do, but will also drive inclusive and accelerated action by creating the kind of public pressure that generates political will.

5. Feminist and women's rights advocates have continuously questioned the business-as-usual approach and have pushed for more just and egalitarian visions of the world. Drawing on our tools of analysis, policymakers will be able to envision new ways of doing things that respond to the needs and the rights of those most left behind.

6. Quite simply, without empowered feminist and women's movements at the table, policies ignore gendered impacts, the dominant thinking that has led to this moment of crisis continues unchallenged and unabated and progress to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals will continue to stagnate, if not deteriorate.

7. Since the first high-level political forum on sustainable development, held in 2016, the Women's Major Group has consistently demanded the following:

(a) Governments must meaningfully include women and girls, in all their diversity, in decision-making and implementation efforts related to the Goals;

(b) Governments must place the human rights of women and girls, in all their diversity, at the centre of policymaking and implementation efforts related to the Goals;

(c) Governments and other relevant bodies, including the United Nations, must invest in the gathering and analysis of data, sufficiently disaggregated by gender and other factors;

(d) Governments and non-State actors must protect and enhance civil society space and protect the lives of women defenders of human rights and the environment;

(e) Governments and other actors, including the private philanthropic community, must adequately finance feminist and women's movements, as well as the gendered realization of the Goals;

(f) Everyone must work collectively to dismantle fundamentalist beliefs and systems of oppression, from patriarchy, to neoliberal capitalism, to militarism.

8. Given the central role that feminist and women's movements play in driving systematic change, Governments and other actors should take the above recommendations seriously in order to accelerate action towards the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals.

## II. Children and youth

9. Progress towards sustainable development is unacceptable. The decade ahead could mark a crucial turning point in the trajectory towards the 2030 Agenda and mobilizing towards it.

10. Impacts of the global crisis due to COVID-19 point to protracted shocks of human rights injustices, transgressions of planetary boundaries, concentrations of power, profit-seeking economic systems, historically accumulated inequalities and systemic undermining of resilience. The pandemic requires people and Governments to work in solidarity with each other, uphold universal principles of dignity and human rights, deliver on commitments to universal health coverage and enact multilateral actions commensurate with the scale of the crisis.

11. Age limits and age-based discrimination continue to impose structural barriers against young people, while their participation in decision-making is too often a tokenistic exercise rather than a genuine intergenerational effort based on principles of meaningful youth engagement.

12. The United Nations, in its growing need for funding, is leaning towards the private sector, without any accountability mechanisms or rules-based frameworks governing public-private partnerships.

13. In order to align the global architecture to respond to known, emerging and future risks, the Major Group for Children and Youth emphasizes the following:

(a) Countries must work together to tackle stigma, fear and misinformation and, in line with the seventy-fifth anniversary of the establishment of the United Nations, commitments to global governance and multilateral efforts need to be upheld, strengthened and galvanized to adequately anticipate and address current and future needs;

(b) All people, regardless of status, must be able to access high-quality services provided by strong social safety nets that are financed through the effective redistribution of wealth;

(c) Failures in assessing, preventing, mitigating and responding to risks through a whole-of-society approach need to be addressed before they become disasters.

14. In order to align the global architecture to implement the 2030 Agenda and other sustainable development frameworks, the Group emphasizes the need to carry out the following:

(a) Uphold human rights, promote peace and security, ensure good governance and exercise the rule of law to ensure well-being and sustainable livelihoods for all;

(b) Overcome oppression and inequalities in all their forms, in particular those associated with various sexual orientations and gender identities, bodily autonomy, cultural and language diversity and those faced by persons with disabilities and members of indigenous groups;

(c) Protect the global environmental commons and establish legally binding frameworks that strengthen environmental governance, especially in the United Nations Decade of Ecosystem Restoration (2021–2030), including through just transitions to a decarbonized economy;

(d) Promote integrated territorial development to address inequalities between different types of human settlements across the spatial continuum;

(e) Align macroeconomic frameworks with the three dimensions of sustainable development, recognizing the economy as a subset of society and the planet;

(f) Delink access to basic services from any migratory or other status; the roles of the various actors benefiting from undocumented migrants and abusive practices should be highlighted and such practices stopped;

(g) Employ knowledge systems from diverse sources, especially through open science, to inform and monitor decisions;

(h) Establish anticipatory governance frameworks that ensure technology justice rather than perpetuate inequalities, while reducing existing technological divides and dependencies.

15. In the light of the ongoing review process of the Economic and Social Council and the high-level political forum, the Group emphasizes the need for the forum to carry out the following:

(a) Provide political leadership and guidance by assessing progress, identifying gaps, highlighting best practices and exploring new policy pathways, taking into account recommendations from other intergovernmental bodies and Council commissions;

(b) Ensure rights-based modalities, meaningful participation and protected spaces for critical segments of society, specifically major groups of stakeholders, building on resolution [67/290](#);

(c) Establish official mechanisms as part of the voluntary national review guidelines, to ensure meaningful stakeholder engagement. Voluntary national reviews should be quality-checked, especially with regard to methodologies for using data and engaging stakeholders, before being submitted to the forum.

16. Increased resources must also be provided to the Secretariat and to organizations of the United Nations system, in order to strengthen the technical and substantive support provided to the forum.

### **III. Non-governmental organizations**

17. The COVID-19 pandemic has brought to the forefront the need for accelerated and united action from all stakeholders. To see an end to the crisis, all countries must work together, all individuals must commit to the actions needed to stop the spread of the virus and all sectors must contribute to the work of saving lives, while

implementing solutions that support recovery and reduce the risk of future pandemics. At the present moment in history, it is possible to see not only what can be achieved when people unite, but also the dire consequences of putting profit before people and the planet.

18. It is difficult at the present time to follow the patterned routines that guided the work of the Non-Governmental Organizations Major Group before the crisis. Nevertheless, in examining the work of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in accelerating action and forging pathways for transformation in aiming to achieve all of the Sustainable Development Goals, those very same lessons of inclusion and of engagement by all stakeholders can be seen in the shared aim of achieving the well-being of the planet, including human, plant and animal life, with the principles of peace, equity and justice at its heart. It is, furthermore, essential that emergency measures should not stifle independent voices, but must instead enable communities to raise their concerns and identify their own solutions.

19. Through the lens of the entry points identified in the *Global Sustainable Development Report 2019: The Future is Now – Science for Achieving Sustainable Development*, NGOs examined their own work and provided input from their unique perspectives. While that work can be identified within each of the multi-target pathways described in the report, more often, the work of NGOs overlaps even those more holistic lines. An action that might begin in the pathway of strengthening human well-being and capabilities almost always and necessarily positively affects the global environmental commons or requires a shift to sustainable and just economies or the development of urban and peri-urban environments, or builds on – or was built upon – sustainable food systems. Indeed, the actions with the greatest impact were multidisciplinary and cross-sectoral, blurring the boundaries of sectors.

20. Overall, true accelerators were not the specific projects, but rather the spirit and processes characterizing them. Therefore, the Non-Governmental Organizations Major Group calls for a global commitment to the following actions:

(a) Include all stakeholders in every process of sustainable development, while valuing and empowering local capacity, wisdom and culture and contextualizing and localizing action;

(b) Empower local communities with education, training, increased knowledge and skills-strengthening, as well the right to lead their own sustainable development;

(c) Foster input, participation and leadership by the people who have been left out of systems that ensure well-being and the availability of opportunities to demonstrate their abilities;

(d) Take holistic, multisectoral and cross-disciplinary action that ensures that the environment, including human and animal life, thrives;

(e) Make support systems flexible and adaptable to meet complex and evolving situations and needs;

(f) Use transparency, open access to information and improve communication across sectors and actors;

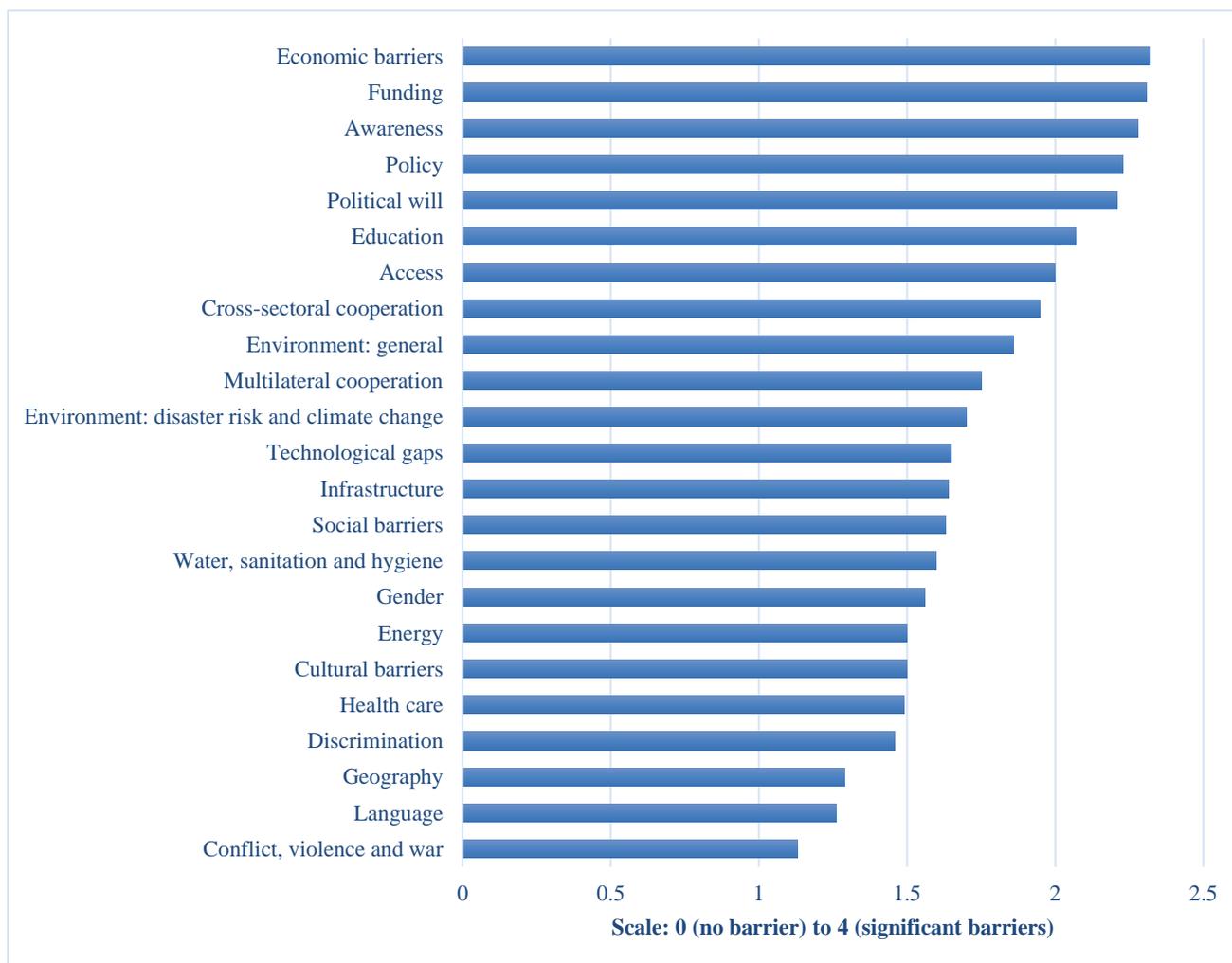
(g) Cooperate and collaborate across and within national borders, with all sectors and on all levels, to create long-term solutions and resiliency while still supporting immediate needs.

21. At the present time, the international community faces not only a pandemic, but also ongoing challenges to the achievement of truly sustainable development. For NGOs, the greatest barriers to accelerated action and transformation are the economic

barriers of poverty, the lack of funding for the work of sustainable development, the need for awareness and education, the absence of policies and the lack of political will for action and accountability (see figure).

22. However, if inclusiveness and local participation are used as transformative pathways, if efforts are collaborative and united and if truth, compassion, equity and justice are adopted as accelerators, not only will the Sustainable Development Goals of the 2030 Agenda be achieved, but so will the goals of complementary international agreements, frameworks and agendas.

### Barriers to transformative pathways: results of a survey of challenges to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals as experienced by members of the Non-Governmental Organizations Major Group, 2020



## IV. Local authorities

23. Local and regional governments share the concerns of the international community and the Secretary-General with regard to the need to embolden ambitions and accelerate the pace of transformation as the implementation decade begins. In the present trying times, with the world facing an unprecedented crisis, it is also becoming very clear that there is a window of opportunity to bend the curve of the current unsustainable trajectory. As the COVID-19 pandemic has demonstrated, all

development agendas need to be addressed as one and need to be underpinned by local service provision, driven by strong local and regional governments close to the communities they serve.

24. In the midst of the COVID-19 outbreak, the provision of public services has proved to be essential in addressing the crisis. The joint efforts by local and regional governments and supported by networks of local and regional authorities, as well as by civil society and the private sector, through peer learning and decentralized cooperation will prove to be crucial to solving the interconnected challenges facing the world and will accelerate action for the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals.

25. Localization requires multilevel and multi-stakeholder coordination, the incorporation of the 2030 Agenda into local and regional plans and policies and financial support and capacity development to enable local and regional governments to participate effectively. Anchoring implementation of the 2030 Agenda in local and regional priorities would allow for the creation of a new framework of governance that is meaningful and practical in the day-to-day lives of citizens.

26. Voluntary national review reporting continues to show that localization varies widely across countries. It is therefore critical to revise the strategies aimed at mobilizing and involving local and regional governments. Local and regional governments had been consulted in the voluntary national review processes of only 42 per cent of the countries that reported to the high-level political forum between 2016 and 2019, and only 33 per cent of such governments have been involved in national coordination mechanisms for the realization of the Sustainable Development Goals. If the Goals are to be achieved, it is critical to ensure the involvement of these governments in voluntary national review processes and the availability of local data disaggregated by gender. Those processes should be seen as opportunities for policy revision in order to create more traction for, and ownership of, the Goals.

27. International systems and national Governments are called upon to promote reforms necessary to strengthening the resources of municipal and regional governments, and to promote adequate regulatory frameworks that allow for the alignment of national, regional and local plans, in order to ultimately unlock the means of implementation for local and regional governments to achieve the Goals.

28. The Local Authorities Major Group stresses the need for the high-level political forum to create space for local, regional and national governments to discuss innovative governance mechanisms and calls for an inclusive forum that promotes and institutionalizes strong dialogue with local and regional governments and stakeholders and in which all spheres of government have a platform to follow up on, present and share their efforts, so as to avoid leaving local and regional governance and territorial cohesion behind.

29. The Group welcomes the inclusion of a session on bolstering local action to accelerate implementation of the 2030 Agenda to address measures to empower and support cities, local and regional authorities, territories and communities and discuss issues related to climate adaptation, biodiversity, sustainable urban development, infrastructure, culture, urban-rural linkages and people-centred services, among other topics. The Group strongly suggests linking that session to the local and regional governments' forum to be held on the margins of the high-level political forum in 2020.

30. The Group reiterates the commitment of its organized constituency to the localization of all universal development agendas and to fostering the development of voluntary local and regional reviews, promoted by associations of local and

regional governments, with input from all local and regional governments in the territory in question.

## **V. Workers and trade unions**

31. Achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals largely depends on progress made in achieving Goal 8, on promoting inclusive policies at the social, economic and environmental levels.

32. The COVID-19 crisis makes achieving Goal 8 more relevant than ever, as it highlights the importance of ensuring occupational safety and health, protecting jobs and workers' rights, strengthening social protection systems and addressing unemployment and shocks to informality. The Workers and Trade Unions Major Group supports the call in the report of the Secretary-General, entitled "Shared responsibility, global solidarity: responding to the socioeconomic impacts of COVID-19", for a human-centred stimulus package to protect the health and income of workers. Governments are called upon to put in place coordinated and multilateral responses, such as the creation of a global social protection fund dedicated especially to the achievement of Goals 1 and 3. Those measures should be complemented by the recommendations set out below to accelerate the achievement of Goal 8 and the implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

### **Sustainable and just economies**

33. Implement and enforce statutory minimum wages that guarantee dignity for all workers and their families. Ensure collective bargaining rights to achieve fair wages above the minimum wage level and to promote collective agreements with sectoral coverage (Goals 1, 8 and 10).

34. Establish a labour protection floor that guarantees fundamental rights for workers, an adequate minimum wage, maximum limits on working time and safety and health at work (Goals 1, 5, 8, 10 and 16).

35. Extend social protection systems and access to universal health care in order to ensure comprehensive and universal coverage to workers in all forms of work through a combination of tax-based social protection floors and contributory social security, in line with International Labour Organization (ILO) standards, namely its Social Security (Minimum Standards) Convention, 1952 (No. 102), and its Social Protection Floors Recommendation, 2012 (No. 202) (Goals 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 8, 10 and 11).

36. Take concrete action to formalize the informal economy in accordance with the ILO Transition from the Informal to the Formal Economy Recommendation, 2015 (No. 204), supported by the ILO Social Protection Floors Recommendation, 2012 (No. 202) (Goals 5, 8 and 10).

37. Invest in quality public education systems, from early childhood to higher education, and guarantee lifelong learning opportunities that enable people to acquire skills and to reskill over their entire lifetimes in the face of environmental and technological transitions (Goals 4 and 8).

38. Support the establishment of an international governance system, standards for digital platform business and regulations to govern the use of data for the technological transition (Goals 8 and 9).

39. Put in place and enforce legislation governing equal pay, care services, the sharing of responsibilities and gender-based discrimination, including pay transparency measures, and ratify and effectively implement the ILO Violence and

Harassment Convention, 2019 (No. 190), and the ILO Violence and Harassment Recommendation, 2019 (No. 206) (Goals 5 and 8).

#### **Energy decarbonization and universal access**

40. Take stock of the externalities of economic activity, such as environmental consequences, and establish statistical measures that go beyond gross domestic product growth.

41. Promote investments in key areas for sustainable work and technological innovations to reduce the impact of production on the environment (Goals 8 and 13).

42. Design and implement just transition plans with workers' and employers' representatives to advance energy decarbonization, sustainable cities and the resilience of rural communities, with a view to leaving no one behind (Goals 7, 8 and 11).

43. Provide technical, legal and financial assistance and implement public industrial policies favouring the transition to a low-carbon, circular production model, with better levels of research, development and innovation and greater social, environmental and economic sustainability (Goals 8 and 13).

#### **Governance and collective action**

44. Institutionalize social dialogue processes and tripartism for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and, in particular, the achievement of Goal 8 (governance).

45. Ensure respect for the right to freedom of association, the right to collective bargaining and the right to organize (ILO Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organise Convention, 1948 (No. 87), and ILO Right to Organise and Collective Bargaining Convention, 1949 (No. 98)) to guarantee collective representation for workers and employers in social dialogue processes (collective action).

46. Improve the availability and comparability of statistical data (especially for less developed countries) to allow for more comprehensive, robust and precise analyses of progress made on achieving the Sustainable Development Goals, including Goal 8 (global governance).

## **VI. Education and academia**

47. The focus of the paper of the education and academia stakeholder group is on the role of education in implementing the 2030 Agenda, with a view to analysing, through different perspectives, why the international community is still not on track to achieving Sustainable Development Goal 4 by 2030. All the points put forward therein stem from the point of view that education and lifelong learning are to be treated as fundamental human rights and a public good. In its paper, the group also seeks to emphasize how the commodification of education remains a major challenge to viewing education as a human right.

48. The analysis is divided into three sections, in which progress made with regard to the achievement of Goal 4 and the challenges involved in its achievement and the improvements necessary to ensuring that achievement are set out. The different dimensions of sustainable development are taken into consideration with regard to the progress made to date. It is important to emphasize that the human rights-based approach is the basis for the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals. That approach not only develops the capacity of duty bearers to meet their obligations, but also encourages rights holders to claim their rights.

49. Recognizing the progress made is an essential part in understanding what else needs to be accomplished in order to get back on track with regard to the attainment of Goal 4. In this regard, reference is made, for instance, to the tremendous progress made towards achieving the goal of universal primary education and to the continuous movement towards gender parity seen in the previous generation, as girls and young women in many parts of the world outnumber boys and young men in schools and universities.

50. In the paper, the group also seeks to highlight the contribution of civil society to the fulfilment of Goal 4, which is often underestimated. Civil society remains one of the main actors in providing education, through formal, non-formal and informal means across the globe, and, despite facing major challenges with regard to the shrinking spaces within which it can operate, continues to be at the forefront of the issue, day and in day out.

51. Nevertheless, while appreciating achievements is a good start, it is also important to thoroughly understand the challenges involved in achieving Goal 4. Owing to both policy and financial challenges, children, young people and adults, especially in the global South, face significant barriers to effectively enjoying their right to education. In both existing and newly created policies around the globe, exclusion and discrimination remain significant barriers to achieving Goal 4, compounded by issues of gender inequality. In addition, conflict, climate change and migration are significant challenges for Governments and the international community with regard to making significant progress towards achieving the Goal.

52. Furthermore, a problematic issue remains that, while it is widely accepted that more resources for financing the implementation of the 2030 Agenda are needed, there is no consensus regarding the strategies that Governments and international donors should adopt to protect the rights and interests of those who have been left behind.

53. One crucial section of the paper contains recommended improvements needed to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals of the 2030 Agenda. Fulfilling the right to education is not limited to guaranteeing access to school services, but also encompasses the content of education, teaching methods and school governance. The notion of transformative education should be positioned at the centre of policy debates on the quality of education.

54. Lastly, in view of the growing threat of privatization in and the commercialization of education and the regressive policies seen in different countries and regions, the education and academia stakeholder group sets out its beliefs that public funding should always be aimed at strengthening public education systems, as stated in human rights law.

## **VII. Business and industry**

55. Even as the global community, the business sector and other stakeholders mobilize to defeat COVID-19, it is important not to lose sight of the need to implement the 2030 Agenda commitments. The Agenda is a road map for responses to the economic, employment and social impacts of the pandemic that will put us on track to resilient and sustainable development that leaves no one behind.

56. The Business and Industry Major Group is ready to join forces with Governments and the United Nations as the international community continues to respond forcefully to the pandemic while advancing the Sustainable Development Goals. The high-level political forum should bring in experts and “doers” from the private sector and mobilize countries and other stakeholders to rebuild better and

stronger throughout their COVID-19 recovery process, by working within the framework of the 2030 Agenda.

**Strengthen high-level political forum governance and create institutional infrastructure for meaningful and practical business engagement**

57. Governments are called upon to support and provide new interfaces and opportunities for the United Nations system, Governments, businesses and other stakeholders to work together to implement the United Nations decade of action and delivery for sustainable development. To ensure a more robust collective impact, a new institutional infrastructure is required to bring in business know-how, partnerships and resources related to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals and the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the decade of action.

58. Policy assessment and dialogue at the United Nations, regional and national levels needs to invite and integrate business views on a more systematic basis and across policy design, implementation and tracking.

**Prioritize essential enablers for business action across the Sustainable Development Goals**

59. Going forward, the high-level political forum should prioritize the essential enablers for action across the Sustainable Development Goals. For business, those fundamental enablers are associated with advancing human well-being and building human capacity, eradicating poverty and ensuring access to essential basic services, such as health, education, water, energy and sanitation.

60. The Business and Industry Major Group believes that the focus of the Economic and Social Council, its forum on financing for development follow-up and the high-level political forum on sustainable development should be to catalyse global technology and funding flows towards economic empowerment and growth, longer-term sustainability pathways and the creation of integrated solutions through cooperation and partnerships at all levels. Particular attention should be dedicated to re-establishing livelihoods, strengthening health-care preparedness and access and boosting access to such infrastructure services as clean water, electricity and connectivity, while building in economic and social resilience.

61. Efforts made in connection with the decade of action and delivery should approach recovery from the quadruple shock to health care, jobs, food security and economic activity, caused by the COVID-19 crisis, on the foundation of good governance and rule of law as set out in Sustainable Development Goal 16. A greater number of collaborative structures at the national and global levels, to share expertise, engage in dialogue and launch partnerships with business, will be critical to achieving this recovery.

**Unleash the potential of partnerships with business, emphasizing a response to and recovery from the pandemic, consistent with the Sustainable Development Goals**

62. In line with Sustainable Development Goal 17, the high-level political forum should mainstream collaborative approaches between the United Nations, Governments, civil society and the business sector to advance the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. The high-level political forum should launch an ongoing dialogue with the business sector to incentivize and scale up partnerships that create measurable shared value towards achieving the Goals.

**Improve links between national actions and international cooperation, including through the voluntary national reviews and resident coordinators**

63. The voluntary national review process at the national and international levels should be more inclusive, by engaging recognized substantive input from business and civil society. The high-level political forum should consider mainstreaming a consultation process with business and other stakeholders to strengthen information on, and monitoring and tracking of, voluntary national review preparation and follow-up.

64. Resident coordinators will be important catalysts for action linked to both the Sustainable Development Goals and COVID-19 taken by Governments and business. Resident coordinators need to closely align with business representatives, employers' federations and Global Compact Local Networks.

**VIII. Persons with disabilities**

65. As noted by the Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, the new international development agenda cannot be implemented if disability inclusion is not considered at the starting point. To advance towards development that is inclusive of all, the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the Sustainable Development Goals should be used as mutually reinforcing tools.

66. In response to the decade of action to accelerate the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, the stakeholder group of persons with disabilities offers Member States and the United Nations system the recommendations outlined below for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals for persons with disabilities around the world.

67. **COVID-19.** It is of utmost urgency, in the light of the COVID-19 pandemic and its disproportionate impact on persons with disabilities, for Governments and the United Nations system to act immediately to protect and ensure the rights of persons with disabilities.

68. **Data.** States are called upon to increase data collection and disaggregation on disabilities and to include the Washington Group short set of questions on disability in all household surveys and censuses to ensure that policymakers address gaps through evidence-based policymaking. Statisticians must start collecting data in priority areas using those questions, and inform policymakers, who, in collaboration with organizations of persons with disabilities and in line with article 4 (3) of the Convention, must enact new regulations and laws to ensure the inclusion and equal participation of persons with disabilities in society.

69. **Rights-based approach to development finance.** States are called upon to introduce a rights-based approach to development finance to ensure that the rights of persons with disabilities are reflected in all fiscal policies and related programmes aimed at reducing inequalities.

70. **Underrepresented groups.** States are called upon to ensure that policies and programmes are inclusive of intersectionality and underrepresented groups of persons with disabilities. Persons with disabilities are incredibly diverse in their identities, and those who experience intersecting forms of discrimination are at further risk of being excluded from society. All persons with disabilities, in particular those from underrepresented groups, in both rural and urban areas, including persons with albinism, persons with leprosy, persons with psychosocial, intellectual, sensorial, and developmental disabilities, people with cognitive disabilities (or people with dementia), as well as children, young people, women, older persons, indigenous peoples and other persons with disabilities, must have equal opportunities to

contribute to sustainable development to truly achieve the Sustainable Development Goals.

71. **Accessibility.** States are called upon to ensure that persons with disabilities have access, on an equal basis with others, to the built environment, information and communication, technology, systems and other facilities, in line with the Convention and the 2030 Agenda. To uphold that aim, the Secretary-General launched the United Nations Disability Inclusion Strategy to achieve sustainable and transformative change towards disability inclusion throughout the United Nations system.

72. **Capacity-building.** States are called upon to support organizations of persons with disabilities with increased capacity and resources, in order to fulfil the growing demand to provide technical expertise to Governments and to follow international processes. United Nations country teams also should establish joint programmes to bring Governments, organizations of persons with disabilities and United Nations entities together to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals at the national level, especially for those most left behind.

73. **Humanitarian action.** States are called upon to integrate the *Guidelines on Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities in Humanitarian Action* of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee in all humanitarian action.

## IX. Volunteer groups

74. Volunteers, and support for their efforts, are essential to the successful implementation of the 2030 Agenda. According to the *2018 State of the World's Volunteerism Report: The Thread that Binds – Volunteerism and Community Resilience*, produced by the United Nations Volunteers programme, an estimated 1 billion volunteers make a difference on the issues that affect them and their communities, often in the most difficult of circumstances. The ambition of the Sustainable Development Goals will not be realized without the contributions of millions of properly supported and enabled volunteers and volunteer-driven organizations in both developing and developed countries. The transformative power of volunteering in particular has the potential to contribute to the decade of action if properly championed.

75. Although a universal phenomenon, volunteering does not occur at uniform rates and effectiveness, but is strongest when it is recognized and supported. National and local governments, the United Nations system, the private sector, civil society, volunteer groups and volunteers themselves all have a role to play in creating and sustaining an enabling environment for volunteering. When these actions succeed, the power of volunteering is unlocked and volunteers are able to make the greatest possible contribution to eradicating poverty and promoting prosperity.

### Recommendations

76. The stakeholder group representing volunteers offers the recommendations outlined below to the high-level political forum, for 2020 and beyond.

#### 1. **Formally recognize the contribution of volunteering to the achievement of Sustainable Development Goals in Member States' voluntary national reviews at the high-level political forum in 2020**

77. All Member States are encouraged to include the contribution of volunteers in their voluntary national reviews. In 2019, countries as diverse as Cambodia, Chile,

Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, Iceland, Mongolia, Oman, Pakistan and Sierra Leone all included the contributions of volunteers in their voluntary national reviews.

**2. Ensure that volunteer groups are fully recognized and supported in national plans and strategies for implementing the 2030 Agenda**

78. All countries are encouraged to build volunteering into their plans and strategies. Several Member States have already passed legislation that supports and promotes volunteering. Currently, some 90 countries around the world now have policies or legislation on volunteering.

**3. Follow the lead of Member States by affirming full support for the implementation of resolution 67/290, in which they expressed support for the participation of non-governmental actors**

79. All Governments are encouraged to continue to engage all stakeholders as contributors to and beneficiaries of policies that allow everyone to work towards realizing the 2030 Agenda. In addition, in General Assembly resolution 73/140, which was jointly facilitated through the Third Committee by the Permanent Missions of Brazil, Chile, Japan and the Russian Federation and sponsored by 124 Member States, the Assembly commended volunteers and encouraged Member States to increasingly cooperate with volunteer-involving and civil society organizations. In the resolution, Member States were also called upon to include information on the scale, contribution and impact of volunteerism in future voluntary national reviews and to engage volunteers in the monitoring of progress made towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals at the national and subnational levels and as part of wider citizen engagement.

**4. Ensure that the accountability, transparency and review framework for the Sustainable Development Goals involves community consultation at all levels, including representation of the most marginalized voices and the volunteers who work most closely with them**

80. All Member States are encouraged to consult with volunteer groups and to include volunteers and the most marginalized voices as part of the mechanism to review the Sustainable Development Goals at the national and local levels. Volunteers and groups organizing volunteers are working daily to realize the Goals in their local communities. They must therefore be afforded an opportunity to be included in the drafting and tracking of policies that affect them.

## **X. Ageing**

81. Accelerated action to implement the 2030 Agenda for people of all ages requires public policies based on a life-course approach and on the human rights framework. In the *Global Sustainable Development Report 2019*, well-being is highlighted as a key driver of sustainable development, and the need to tackle inequalities and deprivations for all ages is stressed.

82. Demographic trends have significant implications for legislation, policies, programmes and services. According to the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, in 2019, people aged 65 years and over accounted for 9 per cent of the global population, with a projected rise to 12 per cent by 2030 and 16 per cent by 2050. Member States must plan for a world that is ageing.

83. The COVID-19 pandemic, which disproportionately affects older persons and those with underlying health conditions, highlights the importance of multifaceted

cooperation and a whole-of-society approach to delivering well-resourced health systems that respond to all ages. The launching of the World Health Organization Decade of Healthy Ageing (2020–2030) is an opportunity to fully recognize that the world is ageing and to ensure that everyone can live a longer and healthier life. A healthy economy requires healthy people of every age.

84. Ageism and age discrimination present in legislation and public policies, such as a mandatory retirement age or policies stipulating age caps for financial, legal and other services, and the scarcity of specific data on older persons exacerbate existing deprivations, entrap older people in chronic poverty and deny them voice and participation.

85. In 2050, women will comprise 54 per cent of the global population aged 65 years and over, and 59 per cent of the total population aged 80 years and over. Women experience greater economic hardship as they age, owing to a lifetime of gender-based discrimination, in particular in terms of education and employment, ending up with few savings and assets. They are also denied rights owing to the intersection of ageism, widowhood, disability, invisibility and negative attitudes about their value and capabilities.

86. The stakeholder group on ageing supports the recommendation contained in the *Global Sustainable Development Report 2019* that social protection, including pensions and support for older persons and persons with disabilities, should not be limited to those who spent their working years in formal, full-time jobs, but should also include those working in the informal sector. The group strongly supports non-contributory, tax-financed social pensions and the urgent roll-out of Sustainable Development Goal 1, target 3 on social protection floors.

87. Member States must adopt measures to prepare for an ageing population that will increasingly live in urban environments. Accessibility for all, regardless of age or ability, while adhering to the principle of universal design, should be a priority in all infrastructure planning.

88. The rights, capacities and needs of older persons remain overlooked in humanitarian relief situations. Gaps in the collection of data about older persons during crises mask impacts and needs by age, gender and disability. Older persons must be included in humanitarian assessments and planning and in disaster preparedness and response.

89. The stakeholder group on ageing strongly supports the recommendation set out in the *Global Sustainable Development Report 2019* to base policies on detailed and disaggregated longitudinal data that track individuals through the life cycle and across generations. Data must be disaggregated at a minimum of five-year age bands. Member States are urged to engage in the work of the Titchfield Group on ageing-related statistics and age-disaggregated data and make use of its recommendations

90. Chronic poverty, inequality, income insecurity and humanitarian crises will affect all generations across the globe beyond 2030, unless life-course policies are adopted immediately. Age-inclusive policies based on the international framework of human rights and intergenerational cohesion based on intersections of age, gender and disability, among other aspects, will deliver income security, the best possible health, decent housing, food security, safety and the enjoyment of rights throughout people's lives.

## **XI. Asia-Pacific regional civil society organization engagement**

### **Not on track to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals of the 2030 Agenda**

91. In Asia and the Pacific, despite progress made on achieving Sustainable Development Goal 4, progress on some Goals remains stagnant, and progress on others is regressing (Goals 12 and 13). While it is home to the fastest growing economies, the region also has millions of poor and undernourished people.

92. Those shortfalls also need to be contextualized in the multidimensional crisis currently facing the people in the region, characterized by the public health crisis prevailing during the COVID-19 pandemic, severe wealth inequality, the environmental and climate crisis and the crisis of democratic rights and good governance. The pandemic has further exposed how neoliberal capitalism has failed to protect people's rights and to deliver on peoples' needs, including with regard to access to quality public health care and universal social protection.

### **Systemic barriers to accelerated and transformative action for sustainable development**

93. The theme of the high-level political forum, "Accelerated action and transformative pathways: realizing the decade of action and delivery for sustainable development", will never be realized without addressing the root causes of the systemic impediments to achieving sustainable development.

94. Although the negative impacts of the current global trade and investment regime and the corporate capture of food security are addressed in the *Global Sustainable Development Report 2019*, the report contains no mention of the role of those factors in perpetuating unequal and destructive economic growth or its role in perpetuating inequalities between rich and poor countries, including through investor-State dispute settlement. National tax laws, bilateral tax treaties and trade agreements have been abused by tax evaders, including multinational corporations, in perpetuating illicit financial flows that are especially detrimental to developing countries. Corporate capture of governance and resources worsens, as solutions for sustainable development increasingly rely on public-private partnerships and investment protection policies that enable corporations to control natural resources and crucial public services for profit. Big industries control technologies and large amounts of data in the ongoing fourth industrial revolution, at the expense of vulnerable workers and the privacy of ordinary citizens. Land acquisitions are increasing owing to growing infrastructure development. The influx of foreign capital and investments in the region has contributed to increasing militarization and conflicts. In many countries, the prioritization of military spending diverts much-needed funds away from services, including education, health and housing. Meanwhile, patriarchy, casteism, feudalism and fundamentalism continue to exacerbate the marginalization of women and other groups subject to discrimination in the social, political and economic spheres, including unpaid and underpaid work done by women. Universal access to well-being in a just, equitable, gender equal world is needed.

95. In order to understand the interlinkages between the Sustainable Development Goals and the systemic issues associated with them, the high-level political forum should not cluster the Goals into entry points, but rather identify how each Goal contributes to the six entry points. The specific recommendations of the Asia-Pacific regional civil society organization engagement mechanism on the six entry points can be found in its full submission.

96. The stakeholder engagement mechanism reiterates its position on strengthening the follow-up and review of the high-level political forum with clearer principles on accountability and human rights and stresses the importance of regional processes, including having voluntary national reviews carried out on a regional basis so as to provide support to countries in terms of content and process. In order to formulate action-oriented policy recommendations, the conversation on Sustainable Development Goals at different levels needs to be urgently shifted to tackling systemic barriers.

97. The decade of action should be based on human rights and development justice, using a model that will not accelerate progress towards increased inequality, greater environmental destruction or more labour rights violations, but that is based on redistributive justice, economic justice, social justice, gender justice, environmental justice and accountability to the peoples.

## XII. Together 2030

### The 2030 Agenda and its Sustainable Development Goals at a crossroads

98. At the time of submission of the present inputs, COVID-19 has spread around the world, affecting over 1 million people and sending billions into lockdown as health services struggle to cope. The Secretary-General has reminded the international community that it has a plan to face the aftermath of the pandemic: the 2030 Agenda and its Sustainable Development Goals.

99. The COVID-19 pandemic is a reminder of the fragility of life and the consequences of not hearing scientific evidence and of not acting in a unified and timely manner.

### Six entry points, but only one joint effort

100. As the theme of the 2020 high-level political forum review process is based on the six entry points set out in the *Global Sustainable Development Report 2019*, it is important to reflect on the gaps therein. Promoting focalization on single issues and providing high visibility to some Sustainable Development Goals while leaving the most contentious, yet critical, Goals behind may result in losing sight of interlinkages and in weakening the holistic nature of the 2030 Agenda.

101. In addition, it is necessary to take into account that the Goals will not be reached without achieving gender justice or by excluding the voices of children, young people and women. Strengthening efforts to achieve those ends is not only a way to fulfil the commitments of the 2030 Agenda, but also a practical and operative necessity for mobilizing the required capabilities to accelerate actions and to deliver on the Goals effectively.

102. Bearing that in mind, the Together 2030 platform offers the following recommendations:

(a) **Entry point 1: human well-being and capabilities.** The message in the *Global Sustainable Development Report 2019* that people are the greatest asset in the fight for sustainability repositions people at the centre of that struggle, a notion that should be integrated into other entry points;

(b) **Entry point 2: sustainable and just economies.** Of the two opposing models presented, the one that currently prevails is that of increasing the gap between rich and poor and fertilizing the soil for the growth of inequalities;

(c) **Entry point 3: food systems and nutrition patterns.** When some people in a society benefit from agriculture, both with regard to nutrition and health, while others do not, discontent and conflict are likely to result. It is therefore essential to ensure that all people benefit from actions taken and that those actions are in harmony with nature;

(d) **Entry point 4: energy decarbonization and universal access.** With world per capita energy consumption increasing, urgent measures to promote decarbonization, invest in renewable energies, transform the transport sector, abandon fossil fuel subsidies and act at the level of both supply and demand are needed to advance the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals;

(e) **Entry point 5: urban and peri-urban development.** With more than half the world's population living in cities, inclusivity is essential to leaving no one behind. Affordable urban systems for high-quality public services, public education and health care benefit in particular poor and vulnerable urban groups, including children and young people;

(f) **Entry point 6: global environmental commons.** The global environmental commons comprise an interlinked living entity, of which humans form an integral part. Countries should be encouraged to include references to planetary boundaries in their voluntary national reviews as a way to be accountable for their efforts to protect the global environmental commons.

#### **Civil society: contribution and acknowledgement**

103. Alternative reports from civil society need to be taken into account as significant contributions to progress review and solutions that support the achievement of Sustainable Development Goals. Children as agents of change should be included as part of civil society.

104. As a global platform, Together 2030 is fully committed to ensuring the progress of the decade for action and delivery. The United Nations and its Member States are requested to do their part to open and reinvigorate ways that allow civil society to make substantive contributions.

### **XIII. Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex populations**

105. Extreme stigma, discrimination and violence based on sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression and sex characteristics, reinforced by criminalizing and punitive laws and policies in many countries, continue to be among the greatest barriers to progress towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex populations. Those structural barriers prevent individuals of those communities from enjoying their human rights, meaningfully participating in the achievement of the Goals and reaching their full potential. The possibility for them to access their full economic rights and be fully productive workers, business leaders and entrepreneurs is limited, owing to their exclusion from educational opportunities, to discrimination against them in hiring and promotions and to harassment and ill-treatment at the workplace.

106. There is ample room, precedence and creativity to include lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex people in Sustainable Development Goal-related actions in order to leave no one behind, design effective development programmes and realize the Goals. In the light of the theme of the high-level political forum for 2020, "Accelerated action and transformative pathways: realizing the decade of action and delivery for sustainable development", the mobilization of populations that are left

(furthest) behind can accelerate action and is crucial for transformation and for the realization of sustainable development.

107. Although there have been positive outcomes in the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals, severe barriers for the inclusion of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex populations around the globe remain. For instance, criminalizing, pathologizing and discriminatory laws and policies make the realization of the Goals impossible. Moreover, the lack of meaningful participation of these populations in decision-making and other political processes that affect them hinders their valuable contribution and results in ineffective policies that are not targeted to their unique development needs.

108. Patriarchy and heteronormativity are root causes of gender inequality and gender-based violence, harming women and girls, gender non-binary or gender non-conforming people, and men and boys. To eradicate inequalities in line with Goal 10, States must forbid discrimination based on sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression and sex characteristics, introduce laws and policies that protect lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex people and promote a culture that is supportive of diverse sexual orientations, gender identities, gender expressions and sex characteristics.

109. A total of 69 Member States criminalize consensual same-sex behaviour between adults; 31 have laws and regulations enacted to restrict the right to freedom of expression in relation to sexual orientation issues (known as “propaganda laws”); 41 have laws and regulations that limit the ability of sexual orientation-related civil society organizations from being legally registered; and 68 have laws criminalizing HIV non-disclosure, exposure or transmission. These laws exclude lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex populations and people living with and affected by HIV, effectively leaving them behind.

110. It is also important to highlight that, while lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex people share common experiences of marginalization based on sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression and sex characteristics, many also face intersecting forms of discrimination based on gender, age, race, ethnicity, ability, class, socioeconomic status, migration status and other factors that drive exclusion.

111. There is a need for accurate and complete data, disaggregated by sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression and sex characteristics. Proper data collection is one of the best ways to guide concrete accelerated action and deliver transformation. Such data will allow for the formation of evidence-based laws and policies that serve to promote and protect the rights of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex persons. Organizations led by lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex people should be consulted with regard to the data disaggregation and collection process.

112. A human rights-based approach to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals anchors implementation in State obligations established by international law. For instance, the realization of the right to health relies on the fulfilment of corresponding rights that address root causes of exclusion.

113. Finally, enabling the meaningful participation of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex populations in the monitoring and achievement of the Goals would ensure that policies, programmes and administrative measures address their unique needs in an effective and informed manner.

## **XIV. Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015–2030**

114. The current health crisis, and its short- and long-term effects on social and economic development, demonstrates the effects of limited prevention, response and support systems. In order to avoid a similar crisis in the future, it is necessary to build in better resilience for future challenges at the local, national and global levels. It is evident that no individual, no community and no nation is immune to disasters. With enhanced preparedness to face unexpected events, it is possible build institutional and community resilience to reduce the social, environmental and financial impact of such unexpected events.

115. The Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015–2030 provides invaluable guidance for taking action towards risk-informed development and the coherent achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals. The following six practical actions are recommended for strengthening resilience and sustainable development:

- (a) Understand and incorporate the needs and priorities of those most at risk through disaggregated qualitative and quantitative data;
- (b) Plan actions at the local, national and global levels through the lens of risk-informed development across all dimensions of sustainable development;
- (c) Reduce the risk of hazard impacts and impacts caused by other unexpected events by addressing underlying factors that directly or indirectly increase vulnerabilities.
- (d) Strengthen resilience from the perspective of those most at risk by taking a holistic, cross-sectoral and integrated approach to achieving the Goals;
- (e) Diversify and contextualize solutions, including by drawing upon indigenous wisdom, the innovation of young people and persons with disabilities and nature-based approaches, along with appropriate and inclusive technologies, in order to widen the range of who is reached by those solutions;
- (f) Decentralize and localize decision-making and resource allocation to reflect the true value of investing in sustainable development and resilience in the places where those actions must begin.

116. The extent to which the Sendai Framework and the 2030 Agenda will have an impact in the real world will be determined by the collective implementation of those agreements in communities and in daily life. If local Sustainable Development Goal and resilience action is successfully incentivized, global goals can be achieved faster. It is a whole-of-society process that will produce the solutions sought: there is no magic bullet or perfect policy.

117. As the stakeholder engagement mechanism of the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction, the group seeks to open avenues of cooperation, communication, collaboration and capacity-building for inclusive and participatory disaster risk reduction in order to strengthen the resilience of ecosystems and communities and to achieve truly sustainable and resilient development.

## **XV. Scientific and technological community**

118. The world is currently experiencing unprecedented disruption owing to the COVID-19 pandemic, resulting in cascading effects and profound impacts upon health, social and economic systems worldwide, including potential long-term effects on sustainable development efforts. While the immediate priority for countries is to

solve the health crisis and protect the most vulnerable, the COVID-19 outbreak offers, in the longer term, an important opportunity to rethink the very foundations of societies and to move away from the existing system where inequalities in terms of vulnerability and environmental impact are structurally embedded. In that sense, the COVID-19 crisis must become the great accelerator of transformations towards realizing a more sustainable, more equitable and healthier world.

119. Achieving a sustainable, equitable and healthy world requires an integrated transformations approach, such as that outlined in the *Global Sustainable Development Report 2019*, in which the Sustainable Development Goals are addressed in a comprehensive and systemic way, rather than as a collection of discrete goals and associated targets and indicators. With just ten years to go, countries and regions urgently need to design and implement integrated, context-sensitive and attainable pathways towards achieving transformation at all levels and on all scales.

120. Rendering a comprehensive and integrated transformation framework operational will require a greater contribution from the social sciences communities to better understand how transformations begin and unfold and how they might be steered towards achieving equitable and sustainable outcomes; collective processes to define where science is needed and where public and private investments should be prioritized to accelerate the implementation of the 2030 Agenda; and stronger and more equitable collaboration across policy, science, civil society and other stakeholder communities at all levels and scales.

121. There is a special urgency to rethink the role and importance of technology to implement the 2030 Agenda and how it could be reoriented in order to more meaningfully contribute to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals in a transformative way. The global Technology Facilitation Mechanism of the United Nations should become a vehicle through which to assess whether the current stock of technology and knowledge is sufficient for achieving the Goals and suitable for transfer across the globe.

122. The realization and review of the Sustainable Development Goals should take into account the multiple threats, complex risks and various interactions that could threaten progress if programmes are not sufficiently resilient. The conceptualization, identification and understanding of risk demands integrated and interdisciplinary approaches from science, collaboration between science and policy and cross-sectoral engagement by Government. The strengthened collection and exchange of data are cornerstone activities towards achieving that end.

123. For greater coherence and impact, the implementation of five major environmental policy frameworks, namely, the 2030 Agenda, the Sendai Framework, the Paris Agreement, the post-2020 global biodiversity framework and the New Urban Agenda, should be better coordinated to form an integrated global agenda for action for an equitable, sustainable and resilient world.

124. Member States, regions and stakeholders urgently need to consider how they would respond to a situation of planetary emergency where both risk and urgency are high, in the face of mounting evidence that global environmental change will cross tipping points leading to cascading effects across multiple sectors and regions. Learning from the COVID-19 crisis will be important, as it has shown that Governments can act swiftly and resolutely in a crisis and people can change their behaviour in the face of an existential threat.

125. The global institutional framework must be strengthened in order to accelerate action towards implementing the 2030 Agenda. The review of the high-level political forum provides a vital and necessary opportunity to convert the forum into a knowledge-based, coherent and action-oriented arena through improved evaluation

and analysis of evidence-based input. In addition, the United Nations must take steps to ensure that the evidence-based input stemming from the multi-stakeholder forum on science, technology and innovation for the Sustainable Development Goals better feed into the high-level political forum.

---