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## 2019 session

26 July 2018–24 July 2019

High-level segment

### Summary record of the 30th meeting

Held at Headquarters, New York, on Tuesday, 16 July 2019, at 4.30 p.m.

*President:* Ms. King ..... (Saint Vincent and the Grenadines)

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*The meeting was called to order at 4.30 p.m.*

**Agenda item 5: High-level segment** (*continued*)  
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*Introductory statements*

1. **Mr. Harris** (Assistant Secretary-General for Economic Development and Chief Economist, Department of Economic and Social Affairs), introducing the report of the Secretary-General on empowering people and ensuring inclusiveness and equality ([E/2019/65](#)), said that equality meant not just income equality but also equality of opportunity, capacities and recognition. In many countries, economic expansion had masked widening gaps between the rich and the poor and between urban and rural areas. While fostering equality was an ethical imperative, it also boosted economic growth. The political participation of marginalized groups was key, because it increased their impact on decision-making processes. It was also important to include refugees in systems and economies.

2. Strong, inclusive institutions with well-established mechanisms for public participation were essential to sustainable development and the realization of rights. Partnerships with multiple actors were critical for identifying and implementing solutions, and access to information was necessary to provide a solid foundation for such partnerships. Comprehensive pro-equality public policies should be part of broader development frameworks that included investment promotion, access to finance, infrastructure investment and skills development.

3. Technology had tremendous potential for improving equality of opportunity, but it also carried significant risks for human dignity, autonomy and privacy and the exercise of human rights. Therefore, to make progress in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, technology-related policies must include a social dimension.

4. Introducing the Secretary-General's report on the long-term impact of current trends in the economic, social and environmental areas on the realization of the Sustainable Development Goals ([E/2019/66](#)), he said that the report analysed five megatrends that could have a significant impact on the achievement of the Goals: demographic changes, urbanization, climate change, conflicts and protracted crises, and frontier technologies.

5. Population growth was concentrated in the poorest countries, where it posed a serious challenge to sustainable development. An ageing workforce,

particularly in developed countries, might have trouble adapting to technology-driven changes in the labour market. Against this backdrop, increasing migration flows were potentially disruptive and posed complex problems. Dealing with those changes would require integrated, cross-cutting policies on poverty eradication, reducing inequalities, health, economic growth and decent work, and sustainable cities.

6. More than half of the world's population lived in cities, and that proportion was expected to climb. Cities had become economic powerhouses, but they were also major contributors to climate change. Sustainable development would depend increasingly on the successful management of urban growth, especially in low-income and lower middle-income countries, where the most rapid urbanization was expected to occur. For urbanization to benefit all, policies must focus on the needs of the poor and vulnerable for housing, education, health care, decent work and a safe environment. Well-managed urbanization offered a chance to improve urban ecosystems and environmental services, reduce greenhouse gas emissions and air pollution, encourage sustainable consumption patterns and promote disaster risk reduction and management.

7. Poor and vulnerable social groups in developing countries were disproportionately affected by the adverse effects of climate change. The cost of climate inaction was much higher than the cost of ambitious action. Adaptation and mitigation were equally crucial, and countries should bear in mind synergies and trade-offs when adopting mitigation and adaptation policies. They should also seek to decouple economic growth from environmental degradation.

8. Crises were generally driven by multiple, often interdependent factors which increasingly included the impacts of climate change, especially in situations of institutional and socioeconomic fragility and political uncertainty. Building the capacities of poor people, empowering them and promoting greater participation in decision-making and gender equality were critical for preventing conflict. Local institutions had an important role in managing vulnerability and providing incentives to enhance resilience.

9. Frontier technologies held tremendous potential for human well-being and environmental sustainability, but they threatened to outpace the ability of societies and policymakers to adapt to the changes they created. It was important to prepare societies for those changes.

10. **Mr. Ocampo** (Chair of the Committee for Development Policy), introducing the report of the Committee for Development Policy on its twenty-first session ([E/2019/33](#)), said that current levels of

inequality within and between countries were unacceptable and unsustainable. There was an urgent need for a transformation that was grounded in equality, inclusion and human rights, empowered the disempowered and disrupted the mechanisms enabling the concentration of wealth and power. States should adopt innovative approaches to tax system design, public services, industrial policies and intellectual property rights. Development strategies, policies, legal frameworks and public institutions needed to address the severe degrees and multiple dimensions of inequality.

11. To prevent technology from driving inequality, policies and strategies for building productive capacity must seek to reduce the wide disparities among workers in terms of skills and access to jobs and among companies in terms of capacities and access to technology and finance. People and communities should be able to exercise their political, economic and social rights at the national and local levels, and should have equitable access to justice and meaningful participation in decision-making. That required not only formal rules and mechanisms but also skills training, technical support and access to the relevant services.

12. The Committee had undertaken a work programme on the crisis of multilateralism and the future of development policy. Although the multilateral system needed reform, it was important to uphold the principles of multilateralism and common but differentiated responsibilities. Multilateralism was vital to defend the rights and interests of the poorest and most vulnerable, including by adopting equitable multilateral trading and financial systems and appropriate mechanisms for international tax cooperation.

13. The expansion of productive capacity should be the linchpin of the new programme of action for least developed countries for the decade 2021–2030. At the domestic level, such expansion would require the building of development governance capabilities, the creation of synergies between social outcomes and productive capacities, the establishment of appropriate macroeconomic and financial frameworks, and the development of industrial and sectoral policies that promoted technological upgrading and structural transformation. Least developed countries must also receive international support for their integration into the global economy through preferential market access, the easing of supply-side constraints, the transfer of technology and knowledge, resilience-building, and support for social sectors.

14. The programme of action should be fully aligned with the 2030 Agenda, and its follow-up and review

mechanism should take advantage of synergies with the mechanisms for reviewing the implementation of the Agenda, including the voluntary national reviews. It should include a focus on building capacity for the collection, processing and analysis of disaggregated data, and it should strengthen accountability by including civil society and other non-State actors in those processes.

15. The programme of action should take into account the concentration, within a decade, of least developed countries in sub-Saharan Africa and the prevalence of conflict and post-conflict situations in those countries. It should also emphasize support to countries graduating from the least developed countries category, and might realistically set an objective of ensuring that an additional third of the remaining least developed countries met the graduation criteria for the first time. Lastly, the programme of action should aim to increase resilience to economic and environmental vulnerabilities by improving access to environmental and climate financing and by using the economic vulnerability index and other appropriate criteria to allocate development cooperation resources.

16. States should include more concrete information, in their voluntary national reviews, on the strategies they had deployed to implement the 2030 Agenda and on how they were working towards transformation and bringing different policy areas together in an integrated manner. They should address the role of macroeconomic, productive sector and technology policies and discuss the implementation of participatory mechanisms. The reviews would be more effective if they reflected the interconnected nature of the Agenda and included an analysis of the impact of domestic policy on progress towards the Goals in other countries.

**(a) Ministerial meeting of the high-level political forum on sustainable development, convened under the auspices of the Economic and Social Council**

*General debate*

17. **The President** opened the general debate of the 2019 high-level segment on the theme “Empowering people and ensuring inclusiveness and equality”.

18. **Mr. Remengesau, Jr.** (Palau), President of the Republic, speaking on behalf of the Group of Pacific Small Island Developing States, said that a record number of such States were presenting voluntary national reviews. Access to education had improved across the region, enabling the countries to focus on improving the quality of education and building institutions of higher learning. However, their vast

geographies and vulnerability to external shocks continued to pose challenges, and they still needed the support of their partners to build resilience.

19. Goal 13, on action to combat climate change, was critical for the Pacific small island developing States. Even without devastating extreme weather events, climate change eroded biodiversity and the ecosystem services on which the States depended. At the local level, they continued to draw on traditional knowledge to build resilience, and at the regional level they had adopted the Framework for Resilient Development in the Pacific, which provided an integrated approach to managing climate and disaster risk. They strongly urged Member States to demonstrate greater ambition at the climate action summit in September 2019.

20. The Pacific small island developing States emphasized the importance of Goal 17, on partnerships between Governments, the private sector and civil society. Such partnerships were essential to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the SIDS Accelerated Modalities of Action (SAMOA) Pathway. However, those States also needed predictable, adequate and accessible financing through, for example, improved implementation of official development assistance commitments and replenishment of the Green Climate Fund. It was imperative that the criteria for access to financing include vulnerability to natural disasters and the effects of climate change.

21. Lastly, the Pacific small island developing States reiterated the need for an agile, “fit for purpose” and responsive United Nations development system. They acknowledged the efforts that had been made to reposition the system and the outcomes of the review of multi-country offices, and urged inclusive consultation on how to implement the Secretary-General’s welcome decision to establish such an office in the North Pacific.

22. **Ms. Campbell Barr** (Costa Rica), Vice-President of the Republic, speaking on behalf of the Like-minded Group of Supporters of Middle-Income Countries, said that economic growth was not the same as sustainable development. While middle-income countries accounted for a third of global gross domestic product (GDP), they were also home to the majority of the world’s poor and faced serious challenges across the three dimensions of sustainable development. It was therefore clear that an improvement in macroeconomic indicators did not necessarily reflect progress in poverty eradication, since inequality remained widespread in such countries, many of which experienced problems in adopting renewable energy technologies, increasing the efficiency and affordability of energy and strengthening the capacities of cities and local authorities to respond to climate

change, pollution and biodiversity loss. Many such countries also faced challenges related to inclusive, equitable and high-quality education.

23. Such problems were exacerbated by the reduction in opportunities for international cooperation and financial assistance that resulted from increases in per capita income. Many countries had recently lost, or would soon lose, access to concessional financing because of such increases, were unable to offset such losses immediately with tax revenues and, as a result, were less able to fund the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals. For middle-income countries to achieve sustainable development, they needed targeted and differentiated strategies for cooperation, including innovative finance mechanisms. She urged the United Nations development system to work with the international financial institutions to develop transparent measurements of progress on sustainable development that went beyond per capita income, in accordance with the Addis Ababa Action Agenda of the Third International Conference on Financing for Development. International cooperation was important in supplementing the resources mobilized by middle-income countries for sustainable development. Those countries played a strategic role in international cooperation, particularly by sharing experiences and good practices through South-South and triangular cooperation.

24. **Mr. Mansour** (Observer for the State of Palestine), speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, said that efforts to implement the 2030 Agenda must be accelerated. The eradication of poverty in all its forms and dimensions remained the greatest challenge and was indispensable for sustainable development. In addition, urgent global action was needed to address climate change, by implementing the Paris Agreement adopted under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and by shifting financial flows with a view to limiting warming to less than 1.5°C.

25. With up to 1 million species facing extinction, the Group looked forward to the summit on biodiversity at the level of Heads of State and Government, to be held in 2020 in order to highlight the urgency of action on a post-2020 global biodiversity framework that would help the global community achieve the 2050 Vision for Biodiversity. Reducing inequality within and among countries and promoting inclusive, just and equitable societies was critical to empowering people and leaving no one behind. The Group reaffirmed the need to address the diverse needs and challenges of developing countries, especially African countries, least developed countries, landlocked developing countries and small island developing States, as well as the specific

challenges of middle-income countries, conflict and post-conflict countries, and countries and peoples living under foreign occupation. It looked forward to seeing an increased focus on the poorest and most vulnerable during the high-level political forum on sustainable development. It welcomed regional efforts to implement the 2030 Agenda, including those of the regional commissions.

26. The Group was fully committed to multilateralism and to the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities. It stressed the need to uphold the right to self-determination of all peoples, including those living under colonial and foreign occupation, and to respect the territorial integrity and political independence of States. It reaffirmed the right of peoples and nations to permanent sovereignty over their natural wealth and resources, as well as its opposition to the imposition of laws and regulations with extraterritorial impact and all other coercive economic measures, including unilateral sanctions, against developing countries. Such measures should be lifted immediately.

27. **Mr. Mimica** (Observer for the European Union), Commissioner for International Cooperation and Development, said that implementing the 2030 Agenda was a shared responsibility. In 2019, the European Union had published a reflection paper entitled “Towards a sustainable Europe by 2030”, which showed that it had made progress towards most of the Sustainable Development Goals but needed to move more quickly towards a circular economy and a sustainable food system and infrastructure. The green transition must be fair, benefit all and leave no one behind.

28. The first joint synthesis report of the European Union and its member States on supporting the Goals across the world, also issued in 2019, showed significant progress, including initiatives such as the European Union External Investment Plan, intended to unlock public and private investment in Africa and Europe. The European Union supported inclusive, equitable and high-quality education and an economic transformation that would create decent work, promote social dialogue, foster sustainable value chains and encourage sustainable consumption and production. It was working with partner countries to promote public policies that shared the benefits of growth more equitably, and it would continue to lead the fight against climate change by supporting the transition to a climate-neutral economy and promoting coherence between the 2030 Agenda and the Paris Agreement. It supported inclusive societies built on peace, democracy, human rights and the rule of law and considered gender equality and

women’s empowerment essential for achieving all of the Goals.

29. The European Union welcomed the draft intergovernmentally agreed conclusions and recommendations submitted by the President of the Council, on the basis of informal consultations, on the follow-up and review of the financing for development outcomes and the means of implementation of the 2030 Agenda (E/FFDF/2019/L.1), including the reference to integrated national financing frameworks. It would build on the growing global interest in sustainable finance and supported the alignment of financial systems with sustainable development objectives. The world’s largest provider of official development assistance, it would continue to enhance partnerships and develop innovative ways of harnessing all means of implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

30. The high-level political forum had played a useful role in the follow-up and review of the Agenda, and the European Union welcomed the high number of voluntary national reviews and the rigorous preparations for the thematic reviews. With regard to the development system, it reiterated its full support for the Secretary-General’s ambitious reforms. Successful implementation of the Agenda would require effective multilateralism with the United Nations at its core, as well as increased support for the rules-based international order.

31. **Ms. Kubayi-Ngubane** (South Africa), Minister of Tourism, speaking on behalf of the Group of African States, said that African countries were making commendable efforts to achieve the Goals. For example, the African Union had developed a comprehensive 10-year continental education strategy that included plans for ensuring that all children completed free, equitable and quality primary and secondary education by 2030. While Africa was arguably the region that contributed the least to climate change and had the least capacity to deal with it, it was among the worst affected. Nevertheless, the continent was already contributing solutions through the Africa Climate Resilient Investment Facility, the African Union Programme for Renewable Energy Development in African Island States, the Africa Renewable Energy Initiative, and initiatives related to water management and adaptation to climate change. The African Union’s governance and peace and security architectures provided frameworks for advancing Goal 16 on peace, justice and strong institutions.

32. However, the estimated required investment for Africa to realize the 2030 Agenda was equivalent to one third of the continent’s GDP. The Group called for

technology transfer and public and private investment to increase productive employment and create decent work. Furthermore, full implementation of the Addis Ababa Action Agenda was essential. It was equally important to provide support to African Governments in expanding domestic resource mobilization by broadening the tax base, combating illicit financial flows and prioritizing expenditure in the most critical sectors.

33. **Ms. Delgado** (Mexico), Vice-Minister of Multilateral Affairs and Human Rights, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, speaking also on behalf of Australia, Indonesia, the Republic of Korea and Turkey, said that the five delegations reaffirmed their commitment to advancing the 2030 Agenda together. They welcomed the prominence of the high-level political forum, with 47 countries presenting voluntary national reviews in 2019, including Indonesia and Turkey. To accelerate the implementation of the Agenda, partnerships with civil society, the private sector and academia, especially the scientific community, must be strengthened. Also, in view of the private sector's critical role in employment, innovation and investment, Member States needed to create favourable conditions for small and medium-sized enterprises, start-ups and social entrepreneurs. They should also encourage the private sector to use the 2030 Agenda as a framework for addressing future challenges and sharing their achievements and lessons learned.

34. Implementation should also be accelerated by increasing public and private investment and by building capacity in the collection, analysis and use of data. In addition, Member States should focus on the poorest and most vulnerable, financial inclusion and mainstreaming the Goals in their planning instruments, policies, strategies and financial frameworks. It was also important to improve gender equality, empower women and girls and provide inclusive, equitable and high-quality education.

35. The five delegations noted the recommendations contained in the report of the Secretary-General's High-level Panel on Digital Cooperation, issued in June 2019, and looked forward to the high-level thematic debate on rapid technological change, to be convened by the President of the General Assembly at its seventy-fourth session.

36. Speaking in her national capacity, she said that Mexico was fully committed to multilateral action to advance the 2030 Agenda. In June 2019, her Government had launched a new national development plan incorporating the Goals and convened the first meeting of the National Council for the 2030 Agenda for

Sustainable Development, which included representatives of civil society, the private sector and academia.

37. **Mr. de Laiglesia González de Peredo** (Spain), Secretary of State for International Cooperation and for Latin America and the Caribbean, speaking on behalf of the LGBTI Core Group, said that the theme of the 2019 high-level political forum, "Empowering people and ensuring inclusiveness and equality", was particularly relevant to lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex (LGBTI) people across the world. The implementation of the 2030 Agenda was closely linked to the recognition of rights and opportunities and to equality and non-discrimination, including for LGBTI people and their representatives and for human rights defenders in general. The Group supported the mandate of the Independent Expert on protection against violence and discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity, which enhanced the opportunities offered by the 2030 Agenda and went hand in hand with broader aspirations related to human rights, freedoms, democracy and peaceful, inclusive societies. To fully implement the Agenda, it was necessary to put an end to the multiple and intersecting forms of violence and discrimination against LGBTI people. National policies in sustainable development must be based on full inclusion, including of LGBTI people.

38. **Mr. Thongphakdi** (Thailand), Deputy Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, speaking on behalf of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), said that ASEAN remained committed to the robust and accelerated implementation of the 2030 Agenda and that people must be empowered politically, economically and socially to achieve sustainable development. The Association had identified complementarities between the Agenda and the ASEAN Community Vision 2025 in order to enhance cooperation with the United Nations on eradicating poverty, improving infrastructure, enhancing connectivity, promoting sustainable consumption and production, building resilience and strengthening the sustainable management of natural resources. It looked forward to the launch of the ASEAN Centre for Sustainable Development Studies and Dialogue in November 2019 to promote research, capacity-building and dialogue with external partners for the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals. The Association welcomed the interest expressed by a number of partners in supporting the Centre.

39. In 2019, the Association had focused on advancing partnerships for sustainability. To promote inclusiveness, ASEAN fostered cooperation on improving social safety nets; it also planned to establish a training centre for social work and social welfare and a centre for active

ageing and innovation, and it had adopted a master plan for mainstreaming the rights of persons with disabilities into its work. To improve resilience, it had enhanced the capabilities of its emergency response team, was working to operationalize the ASEAN Militaries Ready Group on Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief and had established an additional satellite emergency logistics warehouse in Thailand.

40. To promote conservation and the sustainable use of resources, ASEAN leaders had recently adopted the Bangkok Declaration on Combating Marine Debris in the ASEAN Region. The Association would continue to promote sustainable fisheries, including by exploring the establishment of a network for combating illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing. Lastly, in terms of digital technologies, it was working to enhance connectivity and operationalize a smart cities network as well as a single window for trade facilitation in the region. It would strengthen cooperation among members to bridge the digital divide, and to reap the benefits and address the challenges of the fourth industrial revolution.

41. **Mr. García Moritán** (Argentina), Permanent Representative of Argentina to the United Nations, speaking also on behalf of Afghanistan, Australia, Belgium, Brazil, Canada, the Central African Republic, Colombia, Czechia, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Estonia, France, Georgia, Germany, Ghana, Guatemala, Indonesia, Ireland, Jordan, Liberia, Liechtenstein, Mexico, the Netherlands, Norway, Qatar, the Republic of Korea, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, Somalia, Sri Lanka, Sweden, Switzerland, Timor-Leste, Tunisia, the United Kingdom and Uruguay, said that many of those 36 States were members of the Pathfinders for Peaceful, Just and Inclusive Societies, the Global Alliance for Reporting Progress on Promoting Peaceful, Just and Inclusive Societies and the 16+ Forum. They supported Sustainable Development Goal 16+, which included 12 of the Goal 16 targets in addition to 24 targets from other Goals that measured different aspects of peace, justice or inclusion.

42. Two thirds of the world's population lacked access to justice, 1.5 billion people faced legal problems that they could not resolve, and 1 billion had no legal identity. Corruption and illegal financial flows and arms trafficking threatened societies and economies and undermined democracy and the rule of law. No country could build a just society without protecting human rights and empowering women and children. The 36 delegations would work together to accelerate achievement of Goal 16+ on the basis of the Roadmap for Peaceful, Just and Inclusive Societies. With regard to building peaceful societies, the Roadmap noted that

efforts to sustain peace required a positive vision of prevention that was nationally owned, people-centred and provided a voice for marginalized people and groups. The RESPECT and INSPIRE initiatives provided guidance to countries on the prevention of violence against women and children.

43. To build inclusive societies, the Roadmap called for open government initiatives, support for independent institutions that held Governments accountable and inclusion of subnational stakeholders in all efforts to advance the 2030 Agenda. The report of the Task Force on Justice, established by the Pathfinders, charted a path towards justice for all based on helping people resolve their justice problems, preventing injustices and creating opportunities for people to participate fully in their societies and economies.

44. The Pathfinders would continue to support ambitious measures for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals, the Global Alliance would work with countries to report on progress towards the Goals and the 16+ Forum would bring together representatives of all sectors, including at its Annual Showcase in Timor-Leste in November 2019. The 36 delegations looked forward to the meeting of the high-level political forum at the level of Heads of State and Government, which they would use to redouble their efforts to build peaceful, just and inclusive societies.

45. **Mr. Ligoya** (Malawi), Permanent Representative of Malawi to the United Nations, speaking on behalf of the Group of Least Developed Countries, said that 11 least developed countries were presenting voluntary national reviews in 2019 and urged all stakeholders to act on the recommendations contained in the reviews. In the least developed countries, 35 per cent of people lived in extreme poverty, and undernourishment was on the rise. Half of the population had no electricity, and there was only one doctor per 1,000 people. Economic growth was well below the 2030 Agenda target of at least 7 per cent, and progress on doubling the manufacturing value added share in GDP was slow or non-existent. Only 10 per cent of such value added came from medium- or high-technology industries, and development partnerships had actually declined, causing serious setbacks. Far from doubling, the least developed countries' share of global exports remained below 1 per cent. They accounted for five of the seven countries in debt distress and spent more than 10 per cent of their export earnings on debt servicing. Illicit financial flows were also of great concern.

46. **Mr. Rattray** (Jamaica), Permanent Representative of Jamaica to the United Nations, speaking on behalf of the Group of Friends for Children and Sustainable

Development Goals, said that the participation of children and young people in the 2019 high-level political forum should mark the beginning of the consistent, deliberate and meaningful inclusion of children and young people in the Organization's discussions. To accelerate progress towards the Goals, it was necessary to increase investment in people everywhere, starting when they were children. Vaccinating children saved millions of lives per year and produced economic benefits. Paid parental leave not only helped families but also made companies more productive. Protecting children from violence was a moral imperative, a human right and the foundation of peaceful communities. Such investment must include all children, especially those who lived in poverty, belonged to ethnic and racial minorities, had disabilities, lacked parental care, or were migrants, refugees or internally displaced.

47. In the 30 years since the adoption of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, climate change, rapid urbanization, the unsustainable exploitation of natural resources, protracted conflict, humanitarian crises, forced displacement, digitalization and mass connectivity had profoundly affected children's rights and well-being. However, those years had also brought advances in science and technology that could assist collective and concerted efforts to support children. The Sustainable Development Goals would not be achieved unless human rights, particularly children's rights, were respected, and he invited the Member States to support the global pledge "For every child, every right".

*The meeting rose at 6.15 p.m.*