



General Assembly

Seventy-sixth session

26th plenary meeting

Tuesday, 2 November 2021, 10 a.m.
New York

Official Records

President: Mr. Shahid (Maldives)

In the absence of the President, Mr. Vongnorkeo (Lao People's Democratic Republic), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 10 a.m.

Agenda items 9 and 15

Report of the Economic and Social Council

Report of the Economic and Social Council (A/76/3 Part I and Part II)

Note by the Secretary-General (A/76/277)

Integrated and coordinated implementation of and follow-up to the outcomes of the major United Nations conferences and summits in the economic, social and related fields

The Acting President: In connection with agenda item 9, I would like to recall that, pursuant to resolution 58/316, of 1 July 2004, the Assembly, on the recommendation of the General Committee, decided, at its 2nd plenary meeting, on 18 September, to consider agenda item 9 in its entirety in plenary, on the understanding that the administrative, programme and budgetary aspects should be dealt with by the Fifth Committee.

At the same meeting, the Assembly took note of the clarification that, in implementing resolution 58/316 to consider item 9 in its entirety in plenary, the relevant parts of chapter I of the report (A/76/3) that are under agenda items already allocated to the Main Committees

will be considered by the Committee concerned for final action by the General Assembly.

In connection with agenda item 15, members will recall that, pursuant to resolution 57/270 B, of 23 June 2003, the Assembly decided to consider, under the item, the chapters of the annual report of the Economic and Social Council relevant to the integrated and coordinated implementation of and follow-up to the outcomes of the major United Nations conferences and summits, including through the participation of the President of the Council in its discussions.

I now give the floor to the President of the Economic and Social Council for the 2021 session, His Excellency Mr. Collen Vixen Kelapile, to introduce the report of the Council on its 2021 session.

Mr. Kelapile (Botswana), President of the Economic and Social Council: It is my pleasure to introduce to the General Assembly the report of the Economic and Social Council (A/76/3 Part I and Part II) on its 2021 session on behalf of my predecessor, His Excellency Ambassador Munir Akram of Pakistan. He conveys his regrets, since he could not be present today due to an unexpected commitment.

As Ambassador Akram said in his handover statement,

“[t]hroughout the past year, the Economic and Social Council was at the centre of the intense international discourse on ways and means to respond to the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic and its consequences, while also

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persisting in the endeavour to implement the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and avert the existential threat of a climate catastrophe. Those unprecedented challenges required new, bold and creative responses from the world community.”

The Economic and Social Council therefore contributed to shaping those responses to the multiple crises that we are facing and to advancing the commitment to international solidarity and multilateralism. The commitment to international solidarity and multilateralism was best demonstrated at the conclusion of the seventy-fifth session, when the Economic and Social Council and the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development adopted by consensus a political declaration committing to a response to COVID-19 that advances the SDGs.

The high-level and diverse participation in the Political Forum, with eight Heads of State and Government and more than 100 ministers, showed the continued commitment to the 2030 Agenda and the Paris Agreement on Climate Change, which were broadly seen as the road map for a better recovery from COVID-19. The voluntary national reviews presented by 42 countries highlighted policy approaches to embarking on such recovery paths.

However, the meeting also showed the growing gap between the North and the South and expressed concern regarding the real risk of inequalities among countries starting to increase again as developing countries are left behind on the road towards achieving the SDGs, resulting in a further increase in poverty and political tensions. The High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development and the Economic and Social Council also gave new impetus to the strong commitment to supporting least developed countries, landlocked developing countries and small island developing States, which have been hit harder by the crisis.

Another strong message at the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development and the Economic and Social Council special meeting on vaccines and throughout the year was that ensuring equitable, universal and affordable access to the COVID-19 vaccine is a moral imperative, the only way to overcome the pandemic and a sine qua non condition for a resilient and sustainable world recovery.

There was also much emphasis on the need to mobilize financial resources to support developing

countries’ recovery from COVID-19, including in relation to sovereign debt. At its Forum on Financing for Development, the Economic and Social Council agreed on measures for financing recovery from the pandemic and achieving the SDGs. At its multi-stakeholder Forum on Science, Technology and Innovation, the Economic and Social Council identified concrete ways to utilize science, technology and innovation, especially digitalization, to advance the SDGs.

The Economic and Social Council also put a spotlight on addressing inequality and its structural causes and reforming the socioeconomic systems that have perpetuated it. It called for global action to address inequality and uproot discrimination, including racism, from the very fabric of our social and political institutions.

The deliberations of the High-level Political Forum and Economic and Social Council meetings also reaffirmed and emphasized that people must transform the way they live, work, travel and consume in order to address the interlinked crises of climate change, biodiversity loss, pollution and waste. There was agreement that addressing those issues and, more generally, moving from the crisis to SDG progress requires a whole-of-society approach and innovative partnerships, including engaging Governments, the private sector, civil society and others.

Another major contribution of the Economic and Social Council over the year was to support the United Nations system’s coordinated action in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. The Economic and Social Council showed that it could deliver on its mandate under the Charter of the United Nations to coordinate the work of the United Nations system in times of crisis. Through its operational activities for development segment, the Economic and Social Council delivered on its role as an accountability and oversight platform to accelerate the performance and results of the United Nations development system in supporting countries to realize the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Member States reviewed progress on United Nations system-wide performance in launching the implementation of the 2020 quadrennial comprehensive policy review and the key elements of resolution 72/279, adopted in 2018, on the repositioning of the United Nations development system against the backdrop of the pandemic.

The segment demonstrated the strong commitment of the Secretary-General, the Deputy Secretary-General and the United Nations development system to respond to the ambitious mandates set out in the two resolutions and the dedication of Member States to ensure that they remain a top priority. It also further stressed the complementarity of the roles and responsibilities of the General Assembly, the Economic and Social Council and the governing bodies of the United Nations development system and the need to further strengthen them.

The 2021 humanitarian affairs segment focused on the theme “Strengthening humanitarian assistance to face the challenges of 2021 and beyond: mobilizing respect for international humanitarian law, inclusion, gender, innovation and partnerships”. The message that came out loud and clear from the discussions is that, in the face of global, interconnected and multiple crises, we must stand and work together to urgently address the immediate humanitarian needs, while tackling underlying vulnerabilities to conflict, climate change, inequalities, development disparities and the increasing risk of disease.

We must be proactive, innovative and agile. The Economic and Social Council transition event pointed out, for example, the great extent to which famine is human-made, which also means that it can be “human-unmade”. Concrete proposals emanated from the discussions.

Besides country-level activities, the Economic and Social Council also provided direction to the normative and policy work of the United Nations system and its subsidiary bodies. Through the preparatory integration dialogues and the high-level participation of the Economic and Social Council subsidiary bodies and United Nations system entities, the 2021 integration segment, which was convened just before the High-level Political Forum in early July, distilled and amplified the Economic and Social Council system’s integrated policy solutions for inclusive, resilient and sustainable recovery.

The General Assembly, in its latest resolution 76/4, on strengthening the Economic and Social Council, created a new coordination segment, which has replaced the integration segment. It will be important that the new coordination segment build on lessons learned from the 2021 integration segment, in particular its rich preparatory process. The Economic and Social Council

must seize the opportunity to harness the knowledge and expertise of its subsidiary bodies and the United Nations system in order to provide policy guidance and coordination for an inclusive and resilient recovery from COVID-19 and the achievement of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

The work of the Economic and Social Council has been informed and enriched by young people. The tenth anniversary of the Economic and Social Council Youth Forum, convened in early April, demonstrated once again the importance for young people to contribute to policy discussions through their ideas, solutions and innovations. Because it was fully virtual, the Forum this year benefited from an unprecedented level of attendance, with a record number of 19,000 participants. The Economic and Social Council Youth Forum has become the main platform for young people to make their voices heard on the subject of the SDGs. It is the largest gathering of young people at the United Nations. It is important for the Economic and Social Council to preserve that unique space.

The session of the Economic and Social Council for the period from 2020 to 2021 also produced very tangible outcomes, such as the advances in the dialogue and action on sustainable infrastructure investment, as well as the launch of a process to improve the accessibility of open-source technologies.

I would like to conclude by referring to the messages that came out of the Economic and Social Council high-level segment on strengthening the Economic and Social Council at its seventy-fifth anniversary for sustainable and resilient recovery from COVID-19 and advancing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The segment emphasized international cooperation and solidarity and affirmed the need to renew and strengthen multilateralism — themes that indeed cut across all meetings of the Economic and Social Council this year.

Countries from all regions stressed the important role of the Economic and Social Council as the main organ for coordination, reviewing the operational activities of the United Nations system, listening to the voices and aspirations of young people and actively working to leave no one behind in a sustainable and resilient recovery. I want to make a strong appeal to Member States to believe in the Economic and Social Council. It is a Charter body with important functions and mandates, which should be exploited to address

the most difficult challenges in the twenty-first century from climate change and major population movements to global economic risks, pandemics and technological advances.

We need to work together to address the challenges that threaten our progress in achieving the SDGs. Let us do our utmost to ensure the successful implementation of the measures adopted in June by the General Assembly for strengthening the Economic and Social Council. A forward-looking Economic and Social Council should be the leading global forum in which global economic, social and environmental challenges are discussed and debated. That is what was intended at the founding of the United Nations.

Mr. Zuhuree (Maldives): I thank the President of the Economic and Social Council for his report (A/76/3). The Maldives remains fully committed to the work of the Council and the outcome documents of most of its meetings, including the High-level Political Forum.

In 2015, when we collectively agreed to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, we were optimistic that the political will had been mobilized to usher in a fairer, more resilient and more sustainable future. However, the Council's report confirms that, as is evident from the world around us, we are not yet on track to meet the Sustainable Development Goals.

That trajectory cannot be blamed on the coronavirus disease pandemic alone. We must act in good faith and with urgency to implement our various agreed development agendas, such as the Addis Ababa Action Agenda, the Small Island Developing States Accelerated Modalities of Action Pathway, the Paris Agreement on Climate Change and the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030.

Achieving the Sustainable Development Goals is impossible without protecting the planet. We must address the various interlinked environmental crises we face. For the Maldives and other small island developing States (SIDS), the climate emergency is not a distant threat — it is our reality today. The recent report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change makes it clear that we have a narrow window to limit global temperature rise to below 1.5°C. Domestically, we have set a target of net-zero emissions by 2030. That is one of the most ambitious decarbonization efforts of any country. However, we know that it will require more action by developed and larger countries to really shift our global trajectory.

We need to see more urgent action on all fronts: mitigation, adaptation and support. We hope that the twenty-sixth Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change will result in more ambitious nationally determined contributions and a clear commitment to climate financing, developing countries and financial support for adaptation and resilience efforts.

Today it is estimated there are approximately 100 million tons of plastic waste in the ocean, responsible for the premature death of more than 1 million marine lives. This year's report of the Economic and Social Council emphasizes once again the need to urgently address the dumping of plastic litter and other waste into the ocean. Domestically, the Maldives has taken strong action to combat marine plastic pollution by enacting a ban on the import of most types of single-use plastics.

However, the current multilateral efforts to address that issue are fragmented and lack coherence. Without coordinated action, we cannot effectively tackle that serious threat to our biodiversity and to our tourism and fishing industries. For those reasons, the Maldives calls for a global, legally binding treaty to combat plastic pollution. Beyond the environmental pillar, the report highlights that SIDS face extreme sensitivity with regard to trade, tourism, financial flows and food security.

In the case of the Maldives, our largest economic sector — tourism — contracted by more than 30 per cent last year. Our fish exports declined significantly. This year's report of the Economic and Social Council highlights the need for greater focus on meeting the specific and unique needs of SIDS when it comes to sustainable development. For those reasons, we support the finalization of the multidimensional vulnerability index and to ensure that the relevant multilateral support is in place to address the unique challenges faced by SIDS.

Given the stress that the pandemic has placed on our fiscal situation, a true recovery must include a global debt relief infrastructure to finance development. In developing countries, securing the necessary financial support for pandemic recovery has been more difficult than ever. That is why we support the Group of 20's Debt Service Suspension Initiative and welcome the proposals made for the allocation of new special drawing rights by the International Monetary Fund. Sustainable development requires financial, technical and capacity-

building support. Predictable long-term financing is necessary to allow us to address simultaneously the immediate health crisis and long-term economic and social recovery from the pandemic.

We are heartened by the focus that the current presidency of the General Assembly has placed on women and girls. We acknowledge the tremendous efforts of women all around the world in the formal and informal sectors. However, we note that globally women are almost twice as vulnerable as men when it comes to the impacts of the pandemic. The report and other outcome documents of the many meetings of the Economic and Social Council urge us to close the gender gap and call for a national response to the pandemic that is gender-responsive and that integrates women's participation and leadership.

The Maldives remains firmly committed to narrowing the gender gap by introducing targeted and specific policies and actions to ensure a more inclusive recovery. President Solih places high importance on having women in executive positions. We have women holding one third of ministerial posts in the Cabinet and two female Supreme Court Justices. Women head the Judicial Services Commission and the Human Rights Commission. The Foreign Service Institute of Maldives has also achieved gender parity at the heads of mission level. In a historic event in April, women were elected to one third of local council seats.

The work of the Economic and Social Council must be driven by the goal of meeting the needs of all countries, big and small. Multiple crises, from the pandemic to the climate crisis, have demonstrated how interdependent we are. In other words, in order to ensure our durable and sustainable recovery from the pandemic, we must ensure that our efforts are equitable and leave no one behind. The Maldives looks forward to a meaningful and results-oriented seventy-sixth session and to the Economic and Social Council intensifying efforts towards the full achievement of all our development agendas.

Mr. Al Fazari (Oman) (*spoke in Arabic*): I would like to thank the President of the General Assembly for this opportunity to discuss the report of the Economic and Social Council (A/76/3), which covers the meetings of the Council held in New York and Geneva from 23 July 2020 to 22 July 2021.

Starting next year, my country, the Sultanate of Oman, will be a member of the Economic and Social

Council. We attach great importance to the work of the Council and its subsidiary bodies. We commend the continued and effective work of the Council despite the coronavirus disease (COVID-19)-related challenges, which reflects the role of this main organ of the United Nations system in promoting the economic, social and environmental dimensions of sustainable development and establishing a comprehensive and effective process to implement the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development based on the purposes and principles that underpin our noble Organization.

This year's session of the Economic and Social Council focused on the COVID-19 pandemic and a sustained recovery. It is an extremely important issue, and we hope to continue that focus until the pandemic has ended and people have recovered, particularly given that many countries throughout the world continue to struggle with the impact of the pandemic and its repercussions.

The meetings of the Economic and Social Council, including those of its subsidiary bodies and high-level forums, also addressed other equally important issues, such as poverty eradication, strengthening equality within and among countries, food security, environmental preservation, health care, social protection for all segments of society, fighting crime and realizing criminal justice. I would also like to note the voluntary national reviews submitted to the High-level Political Forum. The Sultanate of Oman submitted its first voluntary national report in 2019. We are preparing our second report, which will be submitted shortly, in coordination with the relevant United Nations committees and bodies.

We believe in the role played by the Organization and its organs, particularly the Economic and Social Council, in following up progress made and sharing best practices in implementing the 2030 Agenda.

There is still an urgent need to intensify efforts in the area of development cooperation at the international level in order to activate the ministerial declaration of the Council's high-level segment. It is imperative to strengthen the role played by Governments, the United Nations and other partners in order to implement the Sustainable Development Goals, promote civil dialogue and solidarity, strengthen cooperation and partnerships for development and establish robust institutions to provide the necessary care for all segments of society,

especially young people, women and children, through effective systems, policies and practices.

In conclusion, we are determined to engage in, and contribute to, the work of the Economic and Social Council, in cooperation with the President, other Member States and partners, in order to achieve practical and tangible results that lead to sustainable development.

We would like to thank the Islamic Republic of Pakistan for its presidency of the previous session. We wish every success to the Republic of Botswana during its presidency of the current session.

Mr. Pary Rodríguez (Plurinational State of Bolivia) (*spoke in Spanish*): First of all, I would like to thank the President of the Economic and Social Council, Ambassador Collen Kelapile, for introducing the report of the Economic and Social Council (A/76/3) to the General Assembly.

My delegation again highlights the work of this important organ of the United Nations, which brings together our States to consider the economic, social, cultural and environmental issues that affect our peoples so that we can develop policies that enable us to address the challenges we face as the international community.

In 2015, here at the Assembly, we agreed on four historic agreements — the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction, the Addis Ababa Action Agenda, the Paris Agreement on Climate Change and the call to change our world through the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. To that end, the role of the Economic and Social Council is more important than ever before, as we are facing not just a climate crisis but also the economic and social fallout from the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, which threatens the progress made in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Bolivia believes it is essential to unite our efforts to achieve the SDGs, build a better post-pandemic world and prevent future pandemics, seeing our common agenda as a complementary intergovernmental road map to strengthen and accelerate the achievement of the 2030 Agenda, with the participation of all States.

Equitable and affordable access to all COVID-19 vaccines is at the heart of our global recovery strategy. We must forge partnerships to promote the fair distribution of vaccines, which is undoubtedly a very important factor. We recall that one of the purposes of the Charter of the United Nations is international

cooperation in solving international problems of an economic, social and humanitarian nature. Therefore, achieving the 2030 Agenda is essential and requires a holistic approach to development strategies in all areas — people, the planet, prosperity, peace and partnerships.

When we speak about sustainable development, economic and social rights and the environment, we refer to issues that are part of the daily life of all citizens of the world. Therefore, our strategies and actions must be more proactive and agile. We must always reflect on how we can help improve the well-being of people who live in the most remote areas of the planet and have been abandoned historically.

As a member of the Economic and Social Council, my delegation will continue to work with all members to strengthen our efforts so that we can meet the challenges we face. We believe that the joint work of the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council remains very important. We must avoid the duplication of effort and maximize effective coordination with the subsidiary bodies of the Council, as we work to ensure effective follow-up in implementing the 2030 Agenda, through the High-level Political Forum and the voluntary national reviews of the different countries.

Mr. Varganov (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We thank the President of the Economic and Social Council for introducing the Council's report on its work (A/76/3) under the presidency of Pakistan.

Despite the ongoing pandemic and the related impediments to the work of the United Nations, we believe that the Pakistani presidency organized an effective and successful session. Despite the coronavirus disease situation in New York, it was able to convene a number of in-person meetings, which allowed for more open and in-depth discussion of the most important issues on the international socioeconomic agenda. Of particular importance are five special meetings of the Economic and Social Council on collective ways and means of overcoming the impact of the pandemic, including vaccine distribution and assistance to the groups of countries most in need.

The Russian Federation has been a member of the Economic and Social Council since its inception. We advocate for strengthening its central coordinating role as an organ — mandated by the Charter of the United Nations — that is needed to effectively implement the socioeconomic agenda for the benefit of all Member

States. We think that it is important to ensure that, when the Economic and Social Council is implementing its programmes, it be guided by the national priorities and development strategies of countries that need assistance.

In order to achieve sustainable development, it is important to ensure that there be balanced progress in three areas — social, economic and environmental. Combating climate change must take into account the current capacities of Member States, and not be implemented at the expense of socioeconomic progress.

Other important tasks include promoting and ensuring the well-being of people through decent jobs and salaries, the expansion of social assistance to the most vulnerable, increased labour productivity, good quality services and easy access to them, the equitable distribution of technologies, and stable infrastructure, including health care.

In conclusion, we would like to point out that, in order to effectively implement the functions of the Economic and Social Council, we must ensure the participation, in its forums and conferences, of a wide range of actors from various geographical regions, such as international experts, businesspeople, academics and representatives of local authorities — not just Government representatives. That way we can make sure that we hear both the voices of the donors of the so-called global North and of developing countries.

We stand ready to work constructively with the new presidency of the Economic and Social Council under the Republic of Botswana.

The Acting President: We have heard the last speaker in the debate on these items.

May I take it that the General Assembly takes note of the report of the Economic and Social Council contained in document A/76/3?

It was so decided (decision 76/512).

The Acting President: The General Assembly has thus concluded this stage of its consideration of agenda items 9 and 15.

Agenda item 119 (continued)

Follow-up to the outcome of the Millennium Summit

The Acting President: The General Assembly will now consider agenda item 119, entitled: “Follow-up to the outcome of the Millennium Summit”, in order to hold a specific meeting focused on development, in accordance with resolution 60/265, of 30 June 2006.

I have been informed that no Member State has requested to take the floor.

The General Assembly has thus concluded this stage of its consideration of agenda item 119.

The meeting rose at 10.45 a.m.