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Coordination segment

Summary record of the 5th meeting

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President: Mr. Kelapile (Botswana)
later: Mr. Chindawongse (Vice-President). (Thailand)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

Agenda item 8: Coordination segment

Opening of the segment

1. **The President**, opening the coordination segment of the Economic and Social Council, said that the introduction of the new segment was one of the most significant changes that the General Assembly had made in June 2021 with a view to strengthening the Council. The newly created segment, taking place at the start of the Council's period of sessions, was designed to give it an opportunity to provide direction and inspiration for the work of its segments, forums and subsidiary bodies, as well as for the United Nations system as a whole, in the run-up to the July 2022 high-level segment and high-level political forum on sustainable development. As the only body with an overview of the sustainable development work of all the United Nations system entities, the Council could instil a sense of purpose, create synergies and enhance cooperation and coordination within the Organization. Thus, the coordination segment was expected to strengthen the Council's leadership and oversight in order to maximize the impact of the United Nations.

2. The partnership forum, held the day before, had brought together a diverse range of stakeholders to discuss the Council's 2022 theme, which was also the theme of the 2022 high-level political forum: "Building back better from the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) while advancing the full implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development". At the forum, participants had emphasized that inclusive partnerships and solidarity were essential to recover from the pandemic and rebuild in a more sustainable way. Humanity was not helpless: the 2030 Agenda and its Sustainable Development Goals provided a clear road map for recovery. Speakers had agreed that the gaping inequalities in access to COVID-19 vaccines were morally unacceptable and must be addressed as a matter of urgency. Equal access to financial resources for recovery was essential, as were institutional capacity-building and additional measures to support the achievement of the Goals. Participants had emphasized the central role of the public sector in enhancing the quality of, and access to, public goods, and in promoting more transparent science-policy interfaces. Many speakers had noted the importance of ownership, leadership and participation at all levels of decision-making throughout recovery efforts. Speakers had also called for greater engagement with youth on issues of national and global policy and efforts to achieve the Goals. Participants had expressed a renewed sense of urgency regarding the need to assist those who were

furthest behind first and had proposed ways to boost the participation of women and vulnerable groups. Policies on areas including health, education, poverty, hunger, inequality and water and sanitation must be improved. Participants had also drawn attention to multi-stakeholder partnerships that delivered and had called for new alliances and initiatives.

3. In the coordination discussions of the next two days, the Council must develop innovative recommendations, building on the partnership forum, to be taken forward by the Council itself, its subsidiary bodies and the United Nations system as a whole. It must also identify areas of the 2030 Agenda that were not receiving adequate attention and consider how to rectify that. Above all, the Council must rekindle international solidarity. Members should use the Council to its full potential, assessing the global response to the pandemic and progress towards the Goals; developing policy guidance based on their shared ideas and experiences; and leveraging action by the United Nations system and other actors to overcome the pandemic and achieve the Goals.

4. **Mr. Chindawongse** (Thailand), speaking in his capacity as the Vice-President of the Council responsible for the coordination segment, said that by identifying overlaps and synergies, the Council would improve the efficiency of its work. Participants should keep in mind not only coordination among the various subsidiary bodies of the Council itself, but also coordination with other United Nations bodies, in particular the General Assembly, and with external entities, such as international financial institutions and regional groups.

5. In their discussions, members of the Council were urged to consider how to make the pledge to leave no one behind a reality. Participants could also consider the cross-cutting issue of women's empowerment, and in particular how that empowerment could be coordinated to the benefit of the Sustainable Development Goals.

Address by the Deputy Secretary-General

6. **The Deputy Secretary-General** said that with less than nine years to reach the Sustainable Development Goals, the world was far from where it should be and the COVID-19 pandemic had driven it further off course. Indicators on poverty, hunger, education and jobs were moving in the wrong direction and the triple planetary crisis of climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution was threatening lives and livelihoods. The costs for people around the world were already immense, with the vulnerable and marginalized suffering the most, and gender equality gains under

threat. However, humanity was not helpless or hopeless; the challenges it faced were, at heart, failures of global governance and solidarity. The Council's new coordination segment could play an instrumental role in accelerating action towards the Goals, in line with the Secretary-General's report *Our Common Agenda*.

7. Achieving an inclusive recovery, and the Goals, would require scale, ambition and accelerated action. Policy synergies and partnerships of unprecedented scope would be needed, as well as stronger institutions that could effectively confront intersecting challenges, embrace public participation and take a long-term view. The global financial system must be rebirthed to ensure that every country had sufficient fiscal space to invest in people and resilience. In order for the subsidiary bodies of the Council to accelerate progress towards the Goals, they must enhance coordination and go further in incorporating climate change, gender equality and the concerns of countries in special situations into their work. The subsidiary bodies should capitalize on the renewed impetus to advance economic transitions in the areas of energy, digitalization and food systems. The new resident coordinator system offered many opportunities to ensure that the work of the Council was translated into results on the ground.

8. By bringing together the executive heads of specialized agencies, including international financial institutions, the inaugural coordination segment could galvanize efforts to make the country-level response of the United Nations more integrated and impactful. It would also enable the Council to leverage the system's combined policy analysis for its own deliberative functions, marking a new chapter in its journey.

9. *Mr. Chindawongse (Thailand), Vice-President, took the Chair.*

Panel discussion: "People-centred and inclusive recovery from the pandemic, including through strengthening social protection"

10. **Mr. Ryder** (Director General, International Labour Organization (ILO)), panellist, speaking via video link, said that the world had, or should have, learned several lessons from the COVID-19 pandemic. What had been a global health emergency had morphed into an economic and social crisis of unprecedented proportions, with an impact that ILO estimated to be more than four times more severe than the impact of the financial crisis of 2008/2009. ILO estimated that the equivalent, in work hours, of approximately 258 million full-time jobs had been lost in 2020, the equivalent of approximately 125 million full-time jobs in 2021, and the equivalent of approximately 52 million in 2022 so

far, with the end still not in sight. Both the pandemic itself and its impact on the world of work had exacerbated inequalities, and the trend continued. The recovery was fragile and its trajectory unequal, meaning that while the advanced economies were bouncing back relatively quickly, most of the developing and emerging economies were not. As a result, people were being left behind. The two primary causes of the imbalance were the unequal rollout of vaccines and the unequal availability of fiscal financial resources to stimulate the recovery process.

11. The human cost of the pandemic had been all that much greater because the majority of people in the world did not enjoy any social protection whatsoever. Belatedly, the international community must address the challenge of extending social protection to all. In addition, all of the transitions that were happening before the pandemic, and their concomitant challenges, had not gone away. Arguably, COVID-19 had accelerated the digital transition. The transition to carbon neutrality held a potential employment and social dividend; however, it was up to the international community to actively reap that benefit by building a just transition towards a carbon-neutral economy.

12. ILO was making good progress on operationalizing the Global Accelerator on Jobs and Social Protection for a Just Transition, which the Secretary-General had launched in September 2021. The Accelerator was built on three mutually reinforcing pillars. The first involved supporting the development of national employment and social protection strategies; the second was aimed at garnering international financial support for those strategies; and the third was focused on enhancing multilateral cooperation in support of the first two objectives. ILO was currently identifying pilot countries to move ahead with the project on the basis of a common road map. Lastly, ILO would be convening a global forum from 22 to 24 February 2022, which would bring together Governments and international organizations to consider how to foster a fully inclusive, human-centred recovery from the crisis in all countries.

13. **Ms. Jakab** (Deputy Director General, World Health Organization), panellist, speaking via video link, said that the COVID-19 pandemic had powerfully illustrated the close interlinkages between health and social and economic development. Its social, economic and health impacts had been deeply unequal, with glaring inequalities between countries and between population groups within countries. It had severely disrupted the provision of many essential health services. Millions of children had missed out on vaccinations against life-threatening diseases, as well as

months of education. Millions of people had lost their jobs or been plunged into poverty. Although there were signs of increased government spending on health during the pandemic, such spending remained uneven, and mostly in high-income countries.

14. Not only did the rates of infection and death caused directly by COVID-19 reveal inequities, but the pandemic had also shed light on major inequities in access to health tools. As at December 2021, almost 8 billion vaccine doses had been administered globally. However, although 9 per cent of the world's population lived in low-income countries, only 0.6 per cent of those doses had gone to low-income countries; every day, six times more boosters were administered globally than primary doses in low-income countries; only 0.4 per cent of tests globally had been carried out in low-income countries; and millions of health and care workers had not been fully vaccinated.

15. Countries continued to carry a double burden: while responding to the pandemic, they must also ensure the resumption of essential health services and get back on track to achieve universal health coverage. The COVID-19 pandemic had also put tremendous strain on health-care waste management systems around the world, threatening human and environmental health. All of those challenges illustrated the need for a people-centred, inclusive recovery based on social and economic policies focused on equity. Inequalities undermined societies' ability to address complex challenges.

16. An inclusive recovery required a renewed commitment to establishing comprehensive social protection floors in all countries. Currently, only 47 per cent of the world's population was covered by at least one element of the social protection floor. In addition to calling for universal health coverage, the World Health Organization (WHO) endorsed the call by ILO for universal social protection. The Council could play an important role in progressing towards those goals. The close links between human, animal and environmental health demanded close cooperation and coordination between sectors, through a One Health approach. National and international policies must be aimed at promoting investment in transparent and equitable governance systems that built the health of people and planet. The recent WHO decision to negotiate a treaty on pandemic preparedness was an important step in that process.

17. **Ms. Squeff** (Permanent Representative of Argentina to the United Nations; Chair, Commission for Social Development), panellist, said that her Commission had a major part to play in addressing the

challenges caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. In her capacity as its Chair, she had proposed the eradication of poverty and hunger as the priority theme for its sixtieth session, which would be held from 7 to 16 February 2022. At the upcoming session, the Commission would also focus on the emerging issue of "national policies and measures implemented by Member States to combat hunger and poverty in times of the COVID-19 pandemic and beyond, and challenges to get on track towards the full implementation of the 2030 Agenda".

18. The number of social protection measures in place had risen exponentially since the onset of the pandemic, with 3,333 new measures implemented between 20 March 2020 and 14 May 2021. Support ranged from national employment protection plans to emergency subsidies for businesses and workers in the hardest-hit sectors, cash transfer schemes, temporary exemptions from payment for public services and unemployment insurance schemes. Countries had acted quickly to protect food security, putting into action food delivery plans and school and child food programmes.

19. The crisis was an opportunity to build back better and overcome the obstacles to the full implementation of the 2030 Agenda through economic recovery strategies that integrated gender, diversity and human rights. The pandemic had particularly affected the material living conditions of women, making the COVID-19 Global Gender Response Tracker, which had been launched by the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), a valuable tool. The Tracker provided data and statistics on good practices, enhancing their visibility and making it possible for them to be replicated and studied.

20. Convinced of the advantages of addressing issues in a cross-cutting manner, at its fifty-ninth session the Commission had considered digital inclusion from a gender perspective. It had adopted a resolution in which it had recognized the various digital gaps that existed, including the gender gap, encouraged Governments to work with other actors to develop policies for digital inclusion and called for stronger international cooperation. In that connection, it was vital to find the synergies between the work of the subsidiary bodies of the Council so that issues could be addressed holistically.

21. The current panel discussion was a welcome step towards cooperation between the specialized agencies of the United Nations, which must unite to address current challenges from a multidimensional standpoint.

The need to strengthen social protection and improve access to decent work, health care, education and healthy food should not be addressed through large-scale, high-level events, but rather through the day-to-day, interconnected work of the agencies, with each agency's competencies playing a part.

22. It was time to consider the effectiveness of social protection strategies, promote mutual learning and learn from the past to improve responses to current needs. The State had an irreplaceable role in spurring a transition towards a more digital, resilient, sustainable, inclusive and people-centred economy. All delegations were invited to participate actively in the upcoming session of the Commission and to openly discuss concrete solutions to help those most in need.

23. **Mr. Fernandez De Soto Valderrama** (Colombia), speaking on behalf of the Like-Minded Group of Countries Supporters of Middle-Income Countries, said that a people-centred response to the COVID-19 pandemic required the full immunization of the global population. As countries had made clear in the Political Declaration on Equitable Access to COVID-19 Vaccines, vaccines must be treated as global public goods and access must be affordable, equitable and fair, without discrimination of any kind. Vaccination rates in middle-income countries remained well below those in higher-income countries. The Group therefore called on United Nations system entities and other stakeholders to jointly enhance vaccine distribution, particularly through the COVID-19 Vaccine Global Access (COVAX) Facility. Innovative solutions were needed to scale up vaccine production in developing countries, including through the dissemination of technology and know-how, in accordance with the rules of the World Trade Organization and the provisions for flexibility in the Agreement on Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights.

24. The Group would continue to advocate tailored solutions that would enable countries to escape the middle-income trap and achieve an inclusive, resilient and sustainable recovery. In that regard, the Council should redouble its efforts to help middle-income countries overcome the multidimensional challenges they faced. Lastly, the Group looked forward to the upcoming discussions on the Secretary-General's report *Our Common Agenda*, and to the high-level thematic debate on galvanizing momentum for universal vaccination. No one was safe until everyone was safe.

25. **Mr. Gonzato** (Representative of the European Union, in its capacity as observer), speaking also on behalf of the candidate countries Albania, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Serbia and Turkey; the stabilization

and association process country Bosnia and Herzegovina, and, in addition, Georgia and the Republic of Moldova, said that although Europeans had paid a heavy price in human losses, they had made important contributions to defeating COVID-19. European scientists had developed messenger RNA (mRNA) vaccines, with 1.6 billion European-made doses having already gone to 150 countries, and more than 300 million doses currently being produced in Europe each month. The European Union would continue to deliver vaccines and ancillary materials and would step up its support for the countries most in need, particularly in Africa. COVID-19 would feature prominently at the forthcoming African Union-European Union Summit. The start of construction of one or more mRNA vaccine production facilities in Africa was envisaged for mid-2022. Scientists believed that mRNA technology used against COVID-19 could also be used against malaria, tuberculosis and HIV. The international community must join forces to strengthen pandemic prevention, preparedness and response, with resilient health systems and universal health coverage as foundations. A future agreement on pandemics under the auspices of WHO could help in that regard.

26. While COVID-19 raged on, existential global threats had not faded away: there had been setbacks on the path towards the Sustainable Development Goals and the world continued to face the triple planetary crisis of climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution. The European Union had reduced its greenhouse gas emissions by approximately a third since 1990, but it needed to further step up climate action and finance. The European Union supported a legally binding agreement on marine litter and plastic pollution. It was essential to adopt an ambitious post-2020 global biodiversity framework and ensure that the United Nations Decade on Ecosystem Restoration 2021–2030 was a success. A green recovery must include sustainable urbanization; in that connection, his delegation commended the Council for its role in the April 2021 high-level meeting on the New Urban Agenda.

27. The European Union had been working with partners to minimize the impact of the pandemic on learning and on children's well-being; facilitate children's safe return to school; and strengthen the underlying social protection systems that enabled school visits and home learning. It was working with local education groups to develop COVID-19 response plans, and had adapted its education cooperation programmes in order to assist Governments under heavy financial pressure to deliver quality educational services. In view of the fact that a successful development agenda required strong, effective partnerships, including with

women's groups and youth organizations, his delegation welcomed the reinvigorated partnership forum that had been convened the day before. The European Union hoped that the common efforts of the international community would contribute to building back better, greener and healthier. If global risks could be mutually reinforcing, so could global solutions.

28. **Mr. Kimura** (Japan) said that in order to tackle COVID-19 and build back better, the international community should embrace human security, an approach to challenges that called for people-centred, comprehensive, context-specific and prevention-oriented responses that strengthened the protection and empowerment of all people and all communities. His delegation expected that the 2022 special report on human security by UNDP would revitalize discussion of the approach among Member States.

29. The pandemic had demonstrated the need to secure global health as a global public good. Japan was determined to maintain its leadership role with regard to universal health coverage and would continue to lead discussions up to and beyond the high-level meeting on universal health coverage to be held in 2023. In response to the imminent need to combat COVID-19, Japan would continue to supply vaccines to countries and regions in need, while steadily implementing its "Last One Mile Support" to ensure that every person was vaccinated. His delegation hoped that the Council would fully take human security and universal health coverage into account in future meetings, including in the Council's forum on financing for development follow-up and at the high-level political forum.

30. **Ms. Buenrostro Massieu** (Mexico) said that social protection systems helped individuals and families, particularly the poor and vulnerable, to contend with crises, find employment, improve productivity, invest in their children's health and education and protect older persons. Universal social protection was key to eradicating poverty and moving towards shared prosperity. With nearly 100 million people pushed into extreme poverty by the COVID-19 pandemic, the international community must find innovative ways to accelerate progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals, in particular Goal 1.

31. Her delegation welcomed the programmes that various United Nations specialized agencies had implemented in more than 60 countries. Such programmes included cash transfer schemes, which provided an additional significant, regular source of income for the poorest households. Far-reaching commitments and solutions were needed to address global challenges. In that regard, the United Nations

specialized agencies and the subsidiary bodies of the Council had the experience and knowledge to support countries to design policies, implement programmes and take decisions based on reliable, high-quality data. Dialogue, multilateralism and cooperation were vital for an effective, inclusive, resilient and sustainable recovery where no one was left behind.

32. **Mr. Liu** Liqun (China) said that the global economic situation was worrying: the rise in inflation in the major economies was spreading, creating economic pressure and affecting people's livelihoods around the world. Moreover, the monetary policies adopted in response to the situation were causing capital market volatility, with emerging and developing markets bearing the brunt. The Global Development Initiative, proposed by President Xi Jinping, was a people-centred response which was based on what mattered most to developing countries and offered a viable path for implementing the 2030 Agenda and achieving post-pandemic recovery.

33. Following the official launch of the Group of Friends of the Global Development Initiative, China looked forward to working within that framework in key areas of cooperation. The Initiative was aimed, first, at strengthening international cooperation on poverty eradication, with a special focus on the problems facing those in developing countries who were relapsing into poverty as a consequence of the pandemic. The second objective was to bolster international cooperation to combat the pandemic, specifically cooperation on drug research and development, ensuring the accessibility and affordability of vaccines in developing countries and bridging the vaccination gap between the global North and the global South. In that connection, China had provided more than 2 billion vaccine doses to other countries and intended to provide a further 150 million doses free of charge to Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) countries and a further 1 billion doses to African countries, 600 million of which would be free of charge. The third objective of the Initiative was to enhance macroeconomic policy coordination and urge major economies to adopt responsible economic policies and reduce negative spillover effects. Lastly, the Initiative was designed to tap the potential for economic growth by securing industrial and supply chains, stimulating the digital economy and other new industries and promoting a stable global economic recovery.

34. **Mr. Hill** (United States of America) said that it would not be possible for the international community to achieve economic recovery without first improving its control over the spread of COVID-19, which in turn required widespread vaccination. The United States was

leading the global response to the pandemic, and would continue to press for rapid, equitable access to safe and effective vaccines globally. To date, the United States had contributed \$4 billion to the Gavi Alliance in support of the COVAX Facility, the vaccines pillar of the Access to COVID-19 Tools (ACT) Accelerator. In September 2021, his Government had announced its intention to purchase and donate an additional 500 million vaccine doses for distribution by the COVAX Facility in 2022, bringing its total to over 1.2 billion doses donated. To date, some 400 million of those doses had been delivered to more than 110 countries free of cost and with no political strings attached.

35. The United Nations could and should play a leading role in global efforts to enhance the resilience of health systems in the face of health emergencies. It should explore cost efficiencies and innovative sources of funding wherever possible, including through the Council and its subsidiary bodies, in order to advance its role in global health security, seeking to ensure that funds were accessible and could be effectively deployed to the areas in greatest need. In addition, the United Nations system should continue to make progress on transparency and accountability on health-related issues, which would have a positive impact on budgetary, management and personnel operations. Lastly, greater coordination among regional bodies, including the regional economic commissions, could assist in the aggregation of demand and joint procurement, improved resource management and planning, and better responses to unique local challenges.

36. **Mr. Lam Padilla** (Guatemala) said that every country had learned lessons from the COVID-19 pandemic. The loss of revenue threatened to increase poverty and migration and to exacerbate the devastating impacts of climate change. The figures that the representatives of ILO and WHO had presented regarding the pandemic's impact on the economy and jobs, and on access to vaccines, diagnostics and medicines, both demonstrated the severity of the problem and made it clear what needed to be done to recover and rebuild. Countries' containment and mitigation measures had affected the way that Governments were working towards the Sustainable Development Goals and their targets. Guatemala had adopted a forward-looking approach that was focused on economic and social protection for individuals and families and based on an economic reactivation plan. The plan, which underpinned efforts in every sector, entailed fiscal, monetary and financial measures

designed to create jobs, attract domestic and foreign investment and spur trade in goods and services.

37. The effects of pandemic had reversed progress towards the Goals, making it necessary for the international community to recommit to accelerated action and to enhance the coordination of national and international efforts. As a member of the Council, Guatemala hoped that its work would be guided by the certainty that the joint action of States and sustainable development partners would make it possible to achieve the Goals and leave no one behind.

38. **Archbishop Caccia** (Observer for the Holy See) said that it would be regrettable if efforts to realize the 2030 Agenda were sidetracked by selective, politicized or divisive approaches to development. Less monopolistic rules on COVID-19 vaccines were essential. Food systems needed to be transformed, and the current throwaway culture replaced with a culture of care that respected the dignity of every person and preserved our common home. Full recovery from the pandemic would require greater assistance to the least developed countries, landlocked developing countries and small island developing States.

39. **Mr. Kaddouh** (Observer for Lebanon) said that vaccine inequity was but one aspect of the larger moral failure in a world that prioritized billions in profits over millions of lives. His country had been among the signatories to the Political Declaration on Equitable Global Access to COVID-19 Vaccines. Technology transfer should be expedited, intellectual property rights waived and the COVAX Facility fully funded. Social protection systems needed to be ramped up without pushing middle-income countries further into debt. The pandemic had demonstrated the need for a paradigm shift in education that could help to bridge the digital divide. He wondered what steps WHO had taken to address the challenges to reproductive health that had been highlighted by the pandemic.

40. **Ms. Hamdouni** (Observer for Morocco) said that her delegation welcomed the revamped approach and spirit of coordination that had characterized the start of the Council's cycle for 2022, which hopefully boded well for a strong high-level political forum. A comprehensive recovery from the pandemic was not possible without equitable access to vaccines and enhanced social protections. Her Government had launched a major reform to extend social protections to large segments of the Moroccan population, including in the informal sector. She wished to hear about interlinkages between the ILO Global Accelerator and *Our Common Agenda*, as set forth in the Secretary-General's report.

41. **Ms. Chivundu** (Observer for Malawi), speaking on behalf of the Group of Least Developed Countries, said that the COVID-19 pandemic had only added to the long list of special challenges already faced by the least developed countries, which were particularly vulnerable to fluctuations in external demand, commodity prices and tourism. Income from employment and remittances had been severely reduced. Education inequalities were being aggravated by the digital divide, and food insecurity was spreading.

42. All those factors compromised the likelihood of the least developed countries attaining the Sustainable Development Goals and required urgent action on the part of stakeholders, the Council and the United Nations system as a whole. Universal and equitable access to vaccines was crucial. Poverty and hunger reduction should be at the centre of the Council's work. Debt relief should be a priority, and development partners needed to meet their official development assistance and climate financing commitments. Access to broadband connectivity and clean energy should be improved. The Group hoped to see a stronger focus on the least developed countries in the Council's documents and in the next ministerial declaration of the high-level political forum. The Group also looked forward to the successful convening of the postponed Fifth United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries and thanked the State of Qatar for its support for that conference and preparatory process.

43. **Mr. Ryder** (Director General, International Labour Organization (ILO)), speaking via video link, said that the discussion had demonstrated how important it was for responses to be multidimensional. Universal and equitable access to vaccinations was just the start. Other areas included social protection, poverty eradication, education and climate action. At both the international and national levels, those dimensions could not be addressed in isolation from one another. Greater coordination was required within the multilateral system and resources needed to be mobilized at scale. The ILO Global Accelerator aligned perfectly with common agenda set forth in the Secretary-General's report. Decent work guarantees were precisely the kind of social protection that should be provided by the renewed social contract.

44. **Ms. Jakab** (Deputy Director General, World Health Organization (WHO)), speaking via video link, said that vaccine equity was a key priority. She thanked those Member States that had provided support to the COVAX Facility, including through donations of vaccines, which would help minimize shortages over the coming months. Initial focus would be on countries with vaccination rates below 10 per cent, with a goal of

70 per cent coverage by the end of 2022. WHO was also working on improving emergency preparedness. The objective was not just to recover from the pandemic, but to get progress back on track towards the Sustainable Development Goals. In particular, health services disrupted by the pandemic needed to be rebuilt. Investments in universal health coverage would help the estimated 1 billion people who were driven into poverty every year by the cost of health care. Bearing in mind that health care had numerous interlinkages with social issues, WHO fully supported the ILO social protection agenda.

45. **Ms. Squeff** (Permanent Representative of Argentina to the United Nations; Chair, Commission for Social Development) said that the representatives of ILO and WHO, as well as all the delegations that had taken the floor, had called for equitable access to vaccines. The Commission for Social Development thanked those countries that had supported the COVAX Facility or donated vaccine doses. The need for an inclusive post-pandemic recovery had also been a common thread. Inclusivity went hand-in-hand with other factors that would support countries' economies to rebound, such as creating jobs and addressing external sovereign debt. In that regard, fair and serious negotiations were needed, and multilateral credit organizations must rise to the occasion. Recovery was not possible without growth and development; States must be able to pursue their development goals in a context of reinvigorated international solidarity. Delegations had also called for a new social contract, in line with the proposal set out by the Secretary-General in his report *Our Common Agenda*. The new social contract would provide a golden opportunity to reconsider and reframe some of the proposals, ideas and actions that had been raised at the current meeting.

Panel discussion: "Protecting the planet"

46. **Ms. Andersen** (Executive Director, United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)), panellist, in a pre-recorded video statement, said that the impacts of the triple planetary crisis – climate change, biodiversity loss, and environmental pollution – were obvious around the globe, as were the steps needed to address them. She wished to focus on the One Health approach, which treated human, animal and planetary health as one and the same. Momentum was building for integrated multisectoral and multi-stakeholder initiatives to promote early disease interventions, sustainable farming practices and responsible global stewardship of the environment. UNEP was working with what was known as the "tripartite alliance for One Health" – the World Health Organization (WHO), the Food and Agriculture

Organization (FAO) and the World Organization for Animal Health (OIE) – to advance multiple Sustainable Development Goals simultaneously.

47. Success would depend on strong financing. In 2020, some \$220 million had been committed to One Health goals. However, the investments needed to prevent future pandemics were estimated at \$3.4 billion. While that might seem like a lot, it was nothing compared to the \$18 trillion that the COVID-19 pandemic had already cost the world. Investment in the One Health approach would not only save lives but was also a smart economic move.

48. **Mr. Sicars** (Managing Director, Environment and Energy Directorate, United Nations Industrial Development Organization), panellist, speaking via video link, said that since the Global Alliance for Circular Economy and Resource Efficiency had been launched in February 2021, it had been joined by 15 Governments plus the European Commission. The Alliance was dedicated to the transition from a wasteful linear economy to a circular economy that recycled products, allowing them either to be reused or to serve as resources for the manufacture of other products. That would contribute to achieving both Goal 9 of the Sustainable Development Goals on resilient infrastructure, sustainable industrialization and innovation, and Goal 12 on sustainable consumption and production.

49. Global population growth and the expectation of a minimum level of development for everyone had rendered the linear economy model unsustainable. Circular economies promoted sustainable economic growth that was both inclusive and environmentally sound. Managed properly, a green recovery could not only create decent jobs and business opportunities in infrastructure areas already targeted by recovery initiatives, but also provide benefits to other sectors. Though still young, the Alliance had already produced several policy papers and promoted its ideas at a number of international forums. It expected more and more Governments to respond to its call as momentum built for the transition to circular economies.

50. **Ms. Mac Intosh** (Permanent Secretary at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, International Business and International Cooperation, Suriname; Chair, United Nations Forum on Forests), panellist, speaking via video link, said that the Glasgow Climate Pact that had emerged from the twenty-sixth session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Agreement on Climate Change had recognized the need to tap into the potential of forests more effectively, and the Glasgow Leaders' Declaration

on Forests and Land Use had been signed by over 142 countries. Sustainable forest management would help to build economies, safeguard biodiversity and combat climate change. It could even help to reduce the risk of future pandemics by providing a buffer against zoonotic diseases.

51. Unfortunately, only limited resources were being allocated to afforestation, reforestation and forest management. Governments, the United Nations system and other partners needed to take decisive action to integrate forest-based solutions into immediate and long-term recovery plans along the lines of the vision set forth in the United Nations strategic plan for forests 2017–2030. The upcoming seventeenth session of the United Nations Forum on Forests scheduled for May 2022 would be holding a high-level round table on the latest developments that would include a second assessment of the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on forests and further preparations for the midterm review of the effectiveness of the international arrangement on forests.

52. **Ms. Joyini** (Permanent Representative of South Africa to the United Nations; Chair, Commission on the Status of Women), panellist, said that gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls in the context of climate change, environmental and disaster risk reduction policies and programmes would be a priority theme of the Commission's sixty-sixth session scheduled for March 2022. Climate and environmental disasters disproportionately affected the livelihoods of women and girls, intensifying their paid and unpaid domestic work and thereby inhibiting their capacity to take action in shaping the political and economic directions of their countries. Facilitating women's employment in decent green and blue jobs should be a major focus of the COVID-19 recovery. Universal social protection and care systems and policies should be put in place to make it possible for women and girls to participate fully in climate, environment and disaster action, and measures should be taken to help women regain the jobs they lost during the pandemic.

53. Even before the 2030 Agenda had been adopted, the Council had called upon all of its functional commissions and other subsidiary bodies of the United Nations to mainstream a gender perspective into their work. That meant paying attention to the impact of policies on women and girls, incorporating gender analysis into documentation, and ensuring that panels and interactive events featured a balanced mix of speakers.

54. **Mr. Salovaara** (Finland) said that his country, along with Iraq, had helped to facilitate negotiations for

the ministerial declaration adopted as the outcome of the 2021 high-level political forum. That declaration had included a very important paragraph on water, in recognition of Goal 6 of the Sustainable Development Goals on clean water and sanitation as an essential enabler of the 2030 Agenda. The United Nations Conference on the Midterm Comprehensive Review of the Implementation of the Objectives of the International Decade for Action, “Water for Sustainable Development”, 2018–2028, scheduled for 2023 would be a crucial opportunity to assess progress and galvanize political will for the Sustainable Development Goal 6 Global Acceleration Framework. The Commission’s upcoming sixty-sixth session, scheduled for March 2022, would provide a chance to highlight the importance of mainstreaming a gender perspective into efforts to achieve Goal 6, and he hoped that the agreed conclusions of that session would feed into the ministerial declaration to be negotiated at the 2022 high level political forum scheduled for July 2022.

55. **Mr. Mahmoud** (Observer for Egypt) said that his country would be hosting the twenty-seventh session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Agreement on Climate Change to be held in November 2022. The Council and the upcoming high-level political forum, which would conduct in-depth reviews of Goals 14, 15 and 17 of the Sustainable Development Goals, would have important roles in the run-up to that session. His country would work with all parties to accelerate the shift from pledges to delivery – especially on financing – and to strike a balance between adaptation and mitigation. It was important to implement a just transition that was mindful of debt issues in development countries. He wished to recall the initiative of fourteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity – which had been held in Egypt in 2018 – to foster coherent, integrated and co-beneficial implementation among all three Rio conventions.

56. **Mr. Salim** (Observer for Kenya) said that the impacts of biodiversity loss and climate change meant that protecting the planet was not an option but a necessity. His country’s national policies and legislation were in line with the aspirations of the United Nations Decade on Ecosystem Restoration, and included the protection of biodiversity, circular solutions and forest restoration. The resumed fifth session of the United Nations Environment Assembly would be hosted in Nairobi in March 2022, on the fiftieth anniversary of the founding of UNEP. Kenya would also be co-hosting Stockholm+50: a healthy planet for the prosperity of all – our responsibility, our opportunity, a meeting to be held in Stockholm at the beginning of June 2022 and the

United Nations Conference to Support the Implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 14: Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development (Oceans Conference), to be held in Lisbon at the end of June 2022.

57. **Mr. Lennartsson** (Observer for Sweden) said that the Stockholm+50 meeting to be hosted in his country in June 2022 would provide an opportunity to reflect on five decades of international action on the environment and chart a course for the future in the wake of the fresh challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic and the ongoing imperatives of sustainable development. He invited all to engage actively with various events being held in the run-up to that meeting, including the preparatory meeting to be held in New York at the end of March 2022.

58. **Mr. Cho Seong-Jun** (Republic of Korea) said that new environmental hazards created by the pandemic included the estimated 130 billion face masks being disposed of every month. That added to the overall problem created by disposable plastic containers, which, he noted, many of those present at the current meeting used every day at lunch. Plastic pollution impinged directly on Goal 14 of the Sustainable Development Goals on sustainable oceans and its target on reducing marine pollution.

59. **Mr. Beleván** (Peru) said that, given its geographic location, his country was particularly concerned about plastics and microplastics in the seas. Marine biodiversity was important, inter alia, for food security in coastal States, and he hoped that the high-level political forum would pay special attention to Goal 14 of the Sustainable Development Goals, on sustainable oceans. His country had been pushing for a resolution to establish an intergovernmental global steering committee to negotiate an international agreement on marine plastic pollution and invited other Member States to support that endeavour. The widespread support for the outcomes of the twenty-sixth session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Agreement on Climate Change was encouraging. Future debates should make sure to include a diversity of voices.

60. **Mr. Hill** (United States of America) said that the climate crisis was the biggest long-term challenge to sustainable development. His country would be quadrupling its climate-related international financing by 2024 to over \$11 billion. The United States would continue to call on all nations to align their commitments and actions with the global warming target of 1.5 degrees Celsius. The Council’s work should

be coordinated with and complementary to the outcomes of the meetings of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Agreement on Climate Change. The conclusions of climate experts should not be subject to negotiation.

61. **Mr. Liu** Liqun (China) said that the global response to climate change should be based on the principle of ecological civilization. The goal of the recovery should be a green circular economy. The Paris Agreement's principle of common but differentiated responsibilities should be adhered to, with developed countries providing developing countries with adequate financing, technology transfer and capacity-building. His country had built climate change-awareness into all its global development initiatives by making the Global Green Development Alliance an integral part of its Belt and Road Initiative. China was committed to holding a carbon-neutral 2022 Winter Olympics and looked forward to hosting the second phase of the fifteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity, scheduled from 25 April to 8 May 2022.

62. **Mr. Murillo Ferrer** (Colombia) said that his country was expediting its transition to renewable energy, which both reduced greenhouse gas emissions and created jobs. His Government was incorporating biodiversity, green growth and circular economy into all its production and consumption policies and was implementing cost-effective nature-based solutions to environmental problems. Colombia would be announcing major sustainable oceans commitments at the forthcoming Oceans Conference. It was committed to leading by example and championing green transitions across Latin America.

63. **Mr. Mamadou Mounsir Ndiaye** (Observer for Senegal) said that when talking about saving the planet, a balance needed to be struck between an anthropocentric and ecocentric approach. People, after all, were part of nature. He wondered how the needs of development might be served while also protecting the planet, bearing in mind the different criteria that needed to be applied to developed and developing countries.

64. **Mr. Zambrana Flores** (Plurinational State of Bolivia) said that the lesson of the recent health crisis for developing nations was that problems needed to be addressed multidimensionally. Development needed to be pursued in harmony with Mother Nature. Eradicating poverty and eliminating inequality were not merely desirable goals, but prerequisites for realization of the 2030 Agenda. Production and consumption would be sustainable only when both producers and consumers

recognized their common but differentiated responsibilities.

65. **Mr. Sicars** (Managing Director, Environment and Energy Directorate, United Nations Industrial Development Organization), speaking via video link, said that the beauty of the circular economy was that it addressed all three elements of the triple challenge – climate change, biodiversity loss and environmental pollution. Inter alia, it offered the hope of stopping threats such as plastic marine pollution at the source. It also had the potential to promote inclusiveness in labour-intensive sectors such as agriculture, food production and construction. The Global Alliance for Circular Economy and Resource Efficiency was an excellent example of how partnerships with Governments and international organizations allowed various stakeholders to make their voices heard. The circular economy had major contributions to make to addressing climate change, especially in areas where renewable energy could not provide full solutions; a system could be developed for factoring the resulting gains into nationally determined contributions. While the circular economy was not the cure-all, it had the potential to foster inclusiveness and promote a people-centred approach to the climate crisis.

66. **Ms. Mac Intosh** (Permanent Secretary at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, International Business and International Cooperation, Suriname; Chair, United Nations Forum on Forests), speaking via video link, said that sustainable forest management and reversing deforestation were keys to addressing the impacts of the planetary crisis. She agreed that it was high time to move from pledges to delivery, especially with regard to the commitments on reforestation made in Glasgow at the twenty-sixth session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Agreement on Climate Change. It was also true that the urgency of needs differed between developed and developing countries. Global partnerships needed to be strengthened to provide developing countries with the technology, capacity-building and expertise needed to rectify uneven progress.

67. **Ms. Joyini** (Permanent Representative of South Africa to the United Nations; Chair, Commission on the Status of Women) said that while the representatives had brought up many good points, she was disappointed not to have heard much mention of gender equality. The climate crisis, natural disasters and environmental degradation had particularly acute impacts on women and girls, especially in rural, indigenous and migrant contexts. She had no doubt that many of the Member States had in place national measures to address the impacts of both the pandemic and climate change on

women and girls. In particular, financing needed to be gender responsive. All the upcoming meetings that had been mentioned during the discussion should adopt a gender-sensitive approach and promote women's participation. She looked forward to participation by Member States and other partners in the upcoming meeting of the Commission on the Status of Women.

The meeting rose at 12.50 p.m.