Economic and Social Council

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27 July 2023–24 July 2024
Coordination segment

Summary record of the 8th meeting
Held at Headquarters, New York, on Thursday, 1 February 2024, at 3 p.m.

President: Mr. Rakhmetullin (Vice-President). . . . . (Kazakhstan)

Contents

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In the absence of Ms. Narváez Ojeda (Chile), Mr. Rakhmetullin (Kazakhstan), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 3.05 p.m.

Agenda item 8: Coordination segment (*continued*)

> *Panel discussion: "Closing of the digital divide towards achieving a global digital transformation"*

1.   **Mr. Lamanauskas** (Deputy Secretary-General of the International Telecommunication Union (ITU)), panellist, said that artificial intelligence could, if harnessed properly, mitigate up to 10 per cent of global greenhouse gas emissions by 2030 and accelerate progress on 70 per cent of the Sustainable Development Goal targets. However, emerging technologies such as artificial intelligence came with real risks, and appropriate governance models were therefore needed. A major risk was being left behind in digital development, given that 2.6 billion people were still unconnected and a handful of countries possessed nearly half of all artificial intelligence-related publications and patents.

2.   ITU and the United Nations had a role to play in developing technical standards to increase the safety and security of artificial intelligence systems and other technologies, in levelling the playing field for developing and least developed countries, and in convening experts from Governments, the private sector and academia. Through its Artificial Intelligence for Good platform, ITU brought more than 40 United Nations agencies together with stakeholders from various sectors. In its *United Nations Activities on Artificial Intelligence* report, ITU had highlighted nearly 300 projects that harnessed artificial intelligence for good, including projects on forecasting food crises and on mapping schools using satellite imagery. The Inter-Agency Working Group on Artificial Intelligence, co-chaired by ITU and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), had recently provided to the High-level Advisory Body on Artificial Intelligence an overview of existing models and frameworks in the United Nations system that were applicable to artificial intelligence governance.

3.   In preparing for the Summit of the Future, efforts should be focused on harnessing the power of technologies, including artificial intelligence, mitigating their risks and ensuring equitable benefits for all.

4.   **Ms. Montoya** (Director of the Institute for Statistics of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization and Co-Chair of the

Committee of the Chief Statisticians of the United Nations System), panellist, said that a high-impact initiative on the power of data had been launched during the Sustainable Development Goals Action Weekend with a view to promoting cutting-edge national data partnerships among Governments, tech companies, civil society, donors and others to revolutionize decision-making, accelerate digital transformation and drive new economic opportunities for a more equal and sustainable world. At the initiative's heart was a new, more transparent approach to financing data systems, with collaborations between countries and donors and a move away from the current fragmented way of financing data. The aim of the initiative was to unlock the data dividend to drive progress towards the Goals using the power of data.

5.   Countries needed investment, skilled people, strong institutions and political leadership to be able to use data and data technologies in ways that transformed progress towards the Goals. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development had provided a unique opportunity to encourage countries to develop their national statistical systems, put in place national data infrastructure and take advantage of emerging globalized digital data sets and other sources of information. However, data infrastructure and governance required careful architectural design to contribute to public sector efficiency and to better statistics to support decision-making. The Committee of the Chief Statisticians of the United Nations System stood ready to serve Member States in coordinating statistical and data activities, and in facilitating dialogue, the exchange of knowledge, the development of technical standards and the sharing of best practices.

6.   **Ms. Merodio Gómez** (Vice-President of the National Institute of Statistics and Geography of Mexico and Co-Chair of the Committee of Experts on Global Geospatial Information Management), panellist, said that thinking globally while acting locally would make it possible to bridge the geospatial digital divide. The most vulnerable countries continued to face the greatest challenges in collecting, analysing, maintaining and using timely and reliable geospatial and other location-based data. The need to significantly increase the availability of high-quality, timely and reliable data disaggregated by geographical location and to exploit geospatial information and other data had therefore been enshrined in the 2030 Agenda and other global development agendas.

7.   The Committee of Experts on Global Geospatial Information Management played a crucial role in setting the agenda for the development of geospatial information globally and promoting its availability,

accessibility and application to address global challenges. The Committee generated geospatial information and created maps that were used to identify areas that lacked access to basic services such as the Internet, health care, education and water, and promoted innovation and partnerships to fill the blank spots. The Committee was overseeing the delivery of key work programmes that would improve the availability and accessibility of geospatial information for all Member States and was working with relevant stakeholders to ensure a robust and enabling legal and policy environment for geospatial information management. The United Nations Integrated Geospatial Information Framework was the key to strengthening geospatial information management across all national institutions and agencies.

8.   **Ms. Ramratan** (Suriname) said that developments in science, technology and innovation had the potential to provide indispensable tools to help to close the digital gap and achieve global digital transformation. It was crucial for people to be able to leverage the benefits of such innovation. Her Government had set out a vision for digital transformation in its national digital strategy for the period 2023–2030. Its goal was to foster accessible, transparent, safe and secure digital transformation that sustainably supported the prosperity and well-being of all citizens of Suriname. Her Government was convinced that strategic global partnerships with public and private stakeholders and international cooperation would enable it to achieve digital transformation.

9.   **Mr. Sørensen** (Representative of the European Union, in its capacity as observer) said that meaningful digital transformation could not be achieved as long as there were people who did not have access to the Internet. Through the Global Gateway initiative, the European Union had been focusing on infrastructure and affordable services to bridge the digital gap. Individuals, including women and girls, must have the skills to use digital tools effectively. Investment in education and training programmes was needed to empower individuals to thrive in the digital world and ensure that they could benefit from digital opportunities. It was essential to foster innovation with consideration of the needs of all segments of society to make the digital transition truly inclusive. The exciting advancements in technology should serve as a bridge, not a divide.

10.   **Ms. Amoroso Das Neves** (Chair of the Commission on Science and Technology for Development) said that, as the world was becoming more data-centred, areas in which data were scarce or unavailable were often neglected. Data divides rendered marginalized communities, including women, tribal groups, religious and linguistic minorities, and migrant workers, invisible. There was also a divide in the ability of various groups to control their data and safeguard their digital rights.

11.   Effective policies for data and technology governance could foster more prosperous societies and boost climate action. Discussions on data governance should be inclusive, and the United Nations provided a neutral platform for inclusive participation by all regions and countries. Addressing the digital and data divides required a concerted effort from Governments, the private sector, the technical and academic communities, international organizations and civil society. At its forthcoming session in April 2024, the Commission on Science and Technology for Development would discuss data for development and data governance.

12.   **Ms. Curzio Vila** (Observer for Mexico) said that digital inclusion should be ensured through concerted efforts, given the profound impact it could have on sustainable development. A comprehensive approach to promoting infrastructure development, digital literacy and inclusive policies was vital for empowering marginalized communities and advancing the global digital transformation. Policies and commitments were needed to make technology accessible and affordable for all. Given the transformative power of knowledge and education, digital skills and expertise must be developed. High-quality data were needed to support the global digital transformation and drive innovation and sustainable development. Data must be managed responsibly, with respect for the right to privacy. Her delegation asked what three priorities should be included in the global digital compact.

13.   **Ms. Ortiz Miranda** (Chile) said that, while the digital revolution offered innovative solutions, especially for developing countries, careful attention should be paid to the associated risks, including threats to cybersecurity and ethical considerations, particularly with respect to the roll-out of artificial intelligence. It was imperative for new technological developments to be shared equally.

14.   At the special meeting of the Economic and Social Council on the future of work, held in Santiago in January 2024, a panel discussion had been held on the impact of the digital transformation, during which Member States and other actors had stressed the need to understand the factors driving transformations in the labour market and design adequate responses.

15.   Although artificial intelligence had the potential to improve and create jobs, concerns about job security, access to social security, data privacy and the risk of bias

must be addressed. It was vital to foster a responsible and ethical digital environment, especially given the ability of artificial intelligence to generate misinformation in a way that seemed credible. Chile welcomed the creation of the High-level Advisory Body on Artificial Intelligence, the forthcoming discussions on the global digital compact and the negotiations on a draft resolution on the responsible use of artificial intelligence for sustainable development. Her delegation wished to know how those new challenges could be addressed while respecting cultural and linguistic diversity and avoiding bias.

16. **Mr. Zhang** Haibo (China) said that the international community should take pragmatic and accelerated measures to bridge the digital divide and promote global connectivity. The topics of bridging the digital divide and promoting digital connectivity should form the core content of the global digital compact. Priority should be given to development to accelerate the digital transformation. The international community should take more robust measures to expand digital cooperation, accelerate the construction of global digital infrastructure, and promote the construction of an inclusive and balanced global digital economy. The United Nations and developed countries should provide more support to developing countries in the form of funding, technology and capacity-building, in order to help them to improve their digital infrastructure and enhance their digital development capacities. The fairness and universality of global digital development should be enhanced with a view to ensuring that all people could share the benefits of digitalization and artificial intelligence.

17. As part of its Global Development Initiative: building on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development for stronger, greener and healthier development, China had identified the digital economy and connectivity in the digital age as key areas of focus. His Government had recently launched a global initiative on the governance of artificial intelligence, advocating the principles of person-centred artificial intelligence for the benefit of humankind. China was willing to deepen exchanges and cooperation with all with a view to better utilizing digital technologies and artificial intelligence to promote global sustainable development and build a shared future for humankind.

18. **Ms. Davis** (Observer for Man Up Campaign US, Inc.) said that artists must be included in discussions about leveraging artificial intelligence for good. The United Nations should establish an arts envoy or an arts division that brought together artists and people with knowledge of the arts to raise awareness of the

Sustainable Development Goals and galvanize people to achieve them.

19. **Ms. Merodio Gómez** (Vice-President of the National Institute of Statistics and Geography of Mexico and Co-Chair of the Committee of Experts on Global Geospatial Information Management) said that the first priority for the global digital compact should be to ensure access for all. The Committee of Experts on Global Geospatial Information Management worked with Member States that provided the best location geospatial data to identify those needs and targets. The second priority should be to break silos and establish stronger partnerships. The Committee had forged strong partnerships with the Statistical Commission and the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names to amplify its impact and was actively seeking to cooperate with other subsidiary bodies of the Council to reduce the divide. The third priority should be to leverage available resources, such as Earth observations, to achieve development aims. Frameworks such as the United Nations Integrated Geospatial Information Framework could help with capacity-building to improve data and geospatial literacy and with achieving the global goals.

20. **Ms. Montoya** (Director of the Institute for Statistics of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization and Co-Chair of the Committee of the Chief Statisticians of the United Nations System) said that the first priority for the global digital compact related to infrastructure for providing access. Such infrastructure could take the form of not only hardware but also human capital. The second priority related to standards to address challenges, concerns and ethical considerations. UNESCO was working on the related issues of digital standards and Internet regulation with a view to providing guidance on minimum parameters. The third priority related to governance, which included having a framework and standards in place to deal with risk and seize opportunities. Proper governance was needed to prevent exclusion from certain sources of data.

21. **Mr. Lamanauskas** (Deputy Secretary-General of the International Telecommunication Union (ITU)) said that, in its landmark 1985 report entitled "The Missing Link", ITU had called for a phone to be within everyone's reach by the beginning of twenty-first century. The current issue was 5G connectivity. Some countries were 90 per cent covered with 5G, whereas others had barely any coverage or were not covered at all. As technologies developed, the digital divide issue would remain; the question was how to orchestrate joint common development to keep in sync with the technologies and how to ensure that the most modern

and state-of-the-art benefits of those technologies were within the reach of all.

22. In terms of the priorities of the global digital compact, the first was the process of achieving the results. In the early 2000s, some of the principles of that process had been set, including inclusivity and a participatory, multi-stakeholder approach, thus ensuring that both those who would benefit and those who would be harmed had a seat at the table. Such principles were still important in shaping the digital future for all.

23. The second aspect was the specific outcomes that were being sought, and in that regard it was important to focus on infrastructure. However, the lack of connectivity and coverage in certain areas was due not only to infrastructure but also to usage gaps. About 95 per cent of the world's population was covered by a network of 3G or higher quality, but 2.6 billion people were still offline. Some 3 billion people were living in areas covered by mobile Internet but did not use it. Fixing those usage gaps depended on skills and affordability. In some countries, mobile phones cost 70 per cent of monthly income, making it difficult for people to obtain those devices.

24. The third priority was building the capacity of everyone, especially at the national level, to manage, promote and develop the technology. A recent ITU survey had shown that 85 per cent of Governments lacked regulations on artificial intelligence and only half of them had an artificial intelligence policy. The huge disparity in national capacities to manage technology must be bridged.

25. In discussing the future of digital technologies, the focus should not be solely on what technologies would be used; it was also important to keep in mind that technology could provide socioeconomic development benefits, including in the areas of education, employment and health, and to ensure that such benefits were accessible to all.

26. **Ms. Pizarro-viales** (Costa Rica) said that learning how to use and working with artificial intelligence applications must become a basic skill. The necessary hardware infrastructure must be installed to enable all to benefit from such applications. To reduce the digital divide, initiatives should be implemented to facilitate access to technology and build digital capacities, especially in developing countries and vulnerable communities. Education and professional training must be reformed to meet the demands for qualifications resulting from technological advances. Incentives for continuous training should be offered to foster a culture of lifelong learning that enabled everyone to adapt to changing market demands. Inclusive policies and

practices for women, older workers, persons with disabilities and other vulnerable groups were needed to address the changes in employment opportunities.

27. Her delegation wondered what practical measures could be taken by organizations, and the Council in particular, to ensure that technological innovations were people-centred and inclusive, and how technology could be leveraged to support vulnerable persons.

28. **Mr. Lamanauskas** (Deputy Secretary-General of the International Telecommunication Union (ITU)) said that Vanuatu was an example of a country that had successfully addressed the digital divide, having reached people with wireless Internet across very complicated terrain that had enabled connectivity for education. Its success had been due to its participatory, community-driven approach. People had been encouraged to come together to discuss with the Government ways to cover and reach populations through universal service policies based on "pay or play" policies. Instead of building telecentres centrally, the Government had distributed grants to communities, enabling them to own their development at the grass-roots level. The focus had been on the outcomes that people needed, rather than on the technology. People and communities had been empowered to use digital technologies to find the information that really mattered to them, such as the market prices of agricultural products, the weather and financing options.

29. The global community must ensure that those lessons were shared and accessible to all. Technology should permeate all the topics addressed by the Council and be showcased as the main means of implementation. At the Transforming Education Summit, for example, technology had taken centre stage as a way to transform and improve education. ITU worked with the World Health Organization (WHO) on ways in which technology could support health, and had launched, together with WHO and the World Intellectual Property Organization, a global initiative on health and artificial intelligence.

30. **Ms. Montoya** (Director of the Institute for Statistics of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization and Co-Chair of the Committee of the Chief Statisticians of the United Nations System) said that ensuring that technological innovations were people-centred and inclusive required not only infrastructure, governance and standards but also access, and access required education and investment in human capital. In order to use technology, a human being needed to have the capacity to understand it. However, UNESCO had found that 9 out of 10 children in Africa were not able to read even a

simple paragraph at the end of primary school. Such a lack of basic capacities and skills in children would make it difficult to seize the opportunities. Estonia was an example of a country that had invested in children in various areas. It was important to take a lifelong approach to learning to invest in human capital over time. In estimating the costs of achieving the Sustainable Development Goals, the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development had found that health and education were the pathways for achieving the other Goals.

31. **Ms. Merodio Gómez** (Vice-President of the National Institute of Statistics and Geography of Mexico and Co-Chair of the Committee of Experts on Global Geospatial Information Management) said that an example of success in addressing the digital divide could be seen in the implementation of the United Nations Integrated Geospatial Information Framework. The Framework was being implemented not only by developing countries but also by developed countries, indicating that it was being used by countries to identify gaps and integrate geospatial information in decision-making.

32. Artificial intelligence was already having a huge impact on the geospatial community, providing an opportunity for the production, processing and modelling of geospatial information and accelerating the process of filling gaps in the global map. Artificial intelligence also offered an unparalleled opportunity to widen the accessibility of geospatial analysis and make complex analytical methodologies easier to use. Such opportunities were not without risk, and the Committee of Experts on Global Geospatial Information Management was fostering a robust and enabling legal and policy environment for geospatial information management.

33. In terms of mapping vulnerability, geospatial information could be used to learn when disasters occurred and how many people were affected. Equitable, inclusive and sustainable development should be fostered to reduce the digital divide. The explosion of technology needed to be accompanied by data provided in a format that decision makers could understand to enable them to take decisions to leave no one behind.

34. **Mr. Singh Gill** (Envoy of the Secretary-General on Technology), moderator, said that it was clear from the discussion that the digital divide did not exist in a vacuum; it was a subset of larger divides, such as the financing for development divide, the education divide and the health divide. It was therefore important for the development process as a whole to progress. At the

Summit of the Future, there would be an opportunity to embed the global digital compact in the larger framework of the Summit's outcome document entitled "A Pact for the Future", in which there would be a focus on reform of the international financial architecture and an emphasis on peace and security.

35. The digital divide was not simply about the connectivity divide, but was also the result of unaffordable devices. There was a big difference between accessing the Internet from a smartphone and accessing it from a laptop or desktop, as the latter provided a much bigger educational opportunity. Although smartphones were useful for e-commerce, entertainment and communication, larger devices were needed to get ahead in life. Data costs were also very high in some parts of the world, preventing users from participating in the digital economy. Most people were unable to access content in their own language that was meaningful to their context and culture. There were large parts of the world where not enough data were being generated because the necessary foundations, such as connectivity, services and digital public infrastructure, were not in place, and because literacy and skills were lacking.

36. There was no artificial intelligence without data, and there were no data without digital infrastructure and participation in the digital economy. Most of the investments in artificial intelligence were being made by a few companies in a few parts of the world, which had implications for the diversity of artificial intelligence innovation. Furthermore, a gap in artificial intelligence could translate into a huge digital divide in the future.

37. The Council was unique in the sense that it received reports not only from those working in the development space but also from those working in the protection space, addressing social protection and human rights issues. Without those protections, it would not be possible to have a digital future that was open, free, secure, inclusive and empowering for everyone.

Panel discussion: "The way forward: from the 2023 Sustainable Development Goals Summit to the Summit of the Future"

38. **The President** said that the Committee for Development Policy had highlighted the fact that a just transition to more sustainable energy grids and more environmentally friendly economies and societies would require structural changes in industrial policies that would differ according to the economic structures, labour market configurations and social and environmental challenges in countries. At its upcoming

session, the Committee would discuss strategies and policy frameworks to harness opportunities for innovation for sustainable development, and would conduct a training review of the least developed countries. The Committee's insights on how to implement sustainable, resilient and innovative solutions to accelerate the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals and leave no one behind would be welcome.

39. **Ms. Fukuda-Parr** (Professor of International Affairs at The New School and Chair of the Committee for Development Policy), panellist, said that a globally just transition required countries to meet their climate commitments and ensure that, in so doing, they did not push poorer countries further behind by creating barriers to trade and constraining policy space, thereby excluding them from the opportunities associated with the expansion of new product markets or relegating them to their traditional role of suppliers of primary commodities.

40. Outdated dogmas could not be relied upon as the basis for policymaking in a rapidly changing international environment characterized by multidimensional and pervasive crises, an unprecedented degree of technological change and the rise of the digital economy. Tools already existed to build systems that supported both innovation and access to that innovation by those who needed it. Such tools could mobilize rather than stifle the immense innovative potential of the global South.

41. The Committee for Development Policy had proposed a new generation of voluntary national reviews with the aim of realigning the reports with their agreed purpose as vehicles for the exchange of experiences and peer learning. The Committee had recommended that, instead of including lengthy descriptions of progress, Member States focus on sharing evidence-based analysis and lessons learned, discussing policy successes and failures, and assessing the core transformative elements of the 2030 Agenda, including means of implementation. The reports should be framed in the context of integrated and universal sustainable development, with commitments to inclusion, human rights and respect for planetary limits. Such an approach would ensure that the voluntary national reviews were focused on key challenges and that they were developed through a transparent and participatory process.

42. **The President** said that, at the 2023 annual meeting of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF), it had been stated that prospects for global growth in the medium term were at their lowest level in decades and that the world was not on a path to eliminate extreme poverty by 2030. He asked how IMF was supporting countries in obtaining access to financing for short-term urgencies and long-term sustainable development needs, and how IMF could assist countries in harnessing the power of multilateralism to accelerate the implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

43. **Mr. Powell** (Director of the New York Office of the International Monetary Fund (IMF)), panellist, said that strong coordination among international agencies was critical at a time when the goal of achieving the Sustainable Development Goals by 2030 was becoming increasingly daunting. The United Nations should send a strong signal that countries needed to support strong domestic reforms with a view to unlocking stronger and more inclusive growth, to ensure strengthened and sustainable revenue mobilization, and to improve governance and transparency. Macroeconomic buffers must be restored after the recent global shocks of conflict and the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic to foster long-term resilience.

44. Recent IMF research indicated that many developing countries could increase their tax-to-gross domestic product (GDP) ratio by up to 9 per cent of their GDP through a combination of tax reform and institutional capacity-building. More efforts were needed to cut non-priority spending and redirect financing towards health, education, well-targeted social safety nets and growth-enhancing public investments. Economically empowering women should be a key part of the solution to the weakest medium-term global growth outlook in decades. IMF continued to be the largest provider of capacity development for revenue mobilization, deploying a variety of tools and data sets.

45. The United Nations should send a strong signal regarding the need for global innovation and coordination on financing for sustainable development among all development partners. The absence of a comprehensive policy response from the international community risked transforming near-term liquidity pressures into solvency issues. Such a response should encompass policy advice, capacity development and financing. The United Nations system should also address the risks to macroeconomic and financial stability stemming from climate change and focus on actionable solutions to scale up climate financing.

46. Many emerging market and developing economies did not have the infrastructure or skilled workforces needed to harness artificial intelligence for sustainable development. Such technology could therefore worsen both gender and income inequality among nations. The

United Nations system should help advanced economies to prioritize artificial intelligence innovation and integration while developing robust regulatory frameworks to optimize benefits. For emerging market and developing economies, the priority should be to lay a strong foundation through investment in digital infrastructure and a digitally competent workforce. IMF was supporting such efforts through its research and analysis, and had just released its Artificial Intelligence Preparedness Index, which measured countries' readiness in areas such as digital infrastructure, human-capital and labour-market policies, innovation and regulation.

47.   **The President** said that, during the Sustainable Development Goals Summit and the High-level Dialogue on Financing for Development in September 2023, the critical importance of domestic resources and taxation, together with the urgent need for international tax cooperation to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals, had been highlighted. It would be interesting to hear about the role of international tax cooperation in levelling the playing field and mobilizing resources to achieve the 2030 Agenda, and about the work of the Committee of Experts on International Cooperation in Tax Matters to further those objectives.

48.   **Mr. Gbonjubola** (Co-Chair of the Committee of Experts on International Cooperation in Tax Matters), panellist, said that events in any nation, no matter how remote, could spill over and have global implications. International tax cooperation was therefore needed to ensure fair taxation that worked for all. Establishing fair taxation in a collaborative way would ensure that every nation could benefit from revenue, that funding was available across the globe, and that nations did not have to depend on other nations to fund their development programmes.

49.   The Committee of Experts on International Cooperation in Tax Matters promoted the spread across the globe of fairness in taxation, dealing with the complex issues of transfer pricing and taxation of the utility economy, and ensuring a level playing field in the negotiation of tax treaties. An international tax cooperation platform would further expand such efforts at the intergovernmental and governmental levels.

50.   The Committee worked in an inclusive way, taking into consideration every idea when setting the agenda of its work programme. The Committee's products were useful to both developed and developing countries, and had contributed to capacity-building in developing countries. Equipping developing countries with the technical ability to deal with complex tax issues had helped significantly in levelling the playing field.

51.   To achieve the 2030 Agenda, all the nations of the world must be able to generate revenue from domestic sources, and the sustainable way of generating revenue appeared to be taxation. Global tax rules must therefore be fair to enable all countries, whether small or large, to generate adequate revenue to ensure good governance, tackle poverty and provide access to energy and a good health system.

52.   **The President** said that it would be interesting to learn about the role of weather, climate and water-related sciences in the effective delivery of sustainable, resilient and innovative solutions to advance the Sustainable Development Goals.

53.   **Ms. Saulo** (Secretary-General of the World Meteorological Organization (WMO)), panellist, said that, earlier that month, WMO had confirmed that 2023 had been the hottest year on record, with the global average temperature 1.45 degrees Celsius warmer than pre-industrial times. The impacts of that figure had been felt through the heatwaves, floods, droughts, wildfires, storms and marine events experienced by every continent in 2023, disproportionately affecting developing countries and vulnerable communities.

54.   National meteorological and hydrological services had an untapped potential to turn commitments into action and accelerate delivery across all the Sustainable Development Goals. The global meteorological community had a long history of sustained international cooperation, exchanging science and data for mutual benefit. However, many meteorological and hydrological services in developing countries did not have the capacity to utilize those shared resources. Accessible finance should be provided to support those services in enhancing delivery across all the Goals.

55.   In the preparations for the Summit of the Future, she welcomed the recognition of the pivotal role of science and technology in advancing sustainable development, the focus on young people and future generations, and the spotlight on the need for enhanced collaboration in outer space. The Summit should be about empowering nations, fostering inclusivity and creating sustainable pathways for a better future for everyone. The world meteorological community was working to unlock the potential of science for all nations and communities to build a better world for the next generation.

56.   **Mr. Singh Gill** (Envoy of the Secretary-General on Technology), panellist, said that the Secretary-General had advocated a rescue plan for people and the planet, calling for truly transformative and strategic measures to accelerate progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals. Science, technology and

innovation and digital cooperation served as key enablers to that end.

57. In recent years, the use of data analytics and basic artificial intelligence techniques in some large developing economies had resulted in increased tax collections. Tax inspectors were using technology that not only improved efficiency and enabled the economical use of resources, but that also helped to create the right environment for taxation to increase. In addition to reform of the taxation system, technology could play an important role in domestic resource mobilization. Digital public infrastructure and digital payment mechanisms could enlarge the base for participation in the modern economy. Whereas in the past it had not made sense for banks to provide smaller loans, the costs of loans had come down, enabling banks to service smaller customers, who were then able to generate more income, which would be pumped into domestic resource mobilization. Technology was therefore a great enabler of progress towards sustainable development at both the macro and the micro levels.

58. Regarding the impact of climate change, there was no disaster response system covering the entire global population. Most people in the world were not covered by early warning systems, leading to huge human and material costs. Leveraging technology, for example to put in place sensors and communications networks, would reduce those costs, build resilience to climate change-induced and other kinds of disasters, and free up resources for development.

59. In the context of the Summit of the Future, there were five critical outcomes: generating more financing for development, including through reform of the international financial architecture; ensuring peace and security as an essential strategic enabler of progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals; investing in future generations; reforming multilateral institutions to ensure the meaningful engagement of Governments and the United Nations system with civil society, the private sector, independent experts, academia, digital platforms and media outlets; and promoting science, technology and innovation and digital cooperation. The single most important factor in reaching the Goals would be diversity in innovation. Creating opportunities for social and economic entrepreneurs to participate in the development process would provide a huge boost to the efforts of Member States towards achieving the Goals.

60. **Mr. Anyaegbu** (Nigeria) said that his country had endeavoured to strengthen institutions with a view to easing access to and creating an enabling environment for foreign direct investment. Most multinational corporations had the impression that an international framework convention on taxation would suffocate investment; however, a global, uniform taxation policy developed through a United Nations platform would ideally protect multinational corporations in addition to economies from the South. During internal discussions on the Pact for the Future and the reform of the international financial architecture, his delegation had expressed its desire for taxation issues to receive the requisite attention. A framework convention was needed to ensure uniformity in taxation.

61. It seemed that, when funds were moved from the global South, no questions were asked, but when funds were moved to the South, concerns of corruption were raised. However, corruption was a shared responsibility. His delegation would therefore be interested to hear the thoughts of the representative of IMF on how the global banking sector could support the process of curbing corruption. Furthermore, when the repatriation of illicit finances was discussed, the topic of potential accrued interest was never considered. If such financial leakages were addressed, there would be enough funds to take care of the needs of Africa, including debts.

62. **Ms. Berrón Salido** (Observer for Mexico) said that her delegation was grateful to Germany and Namibia for their hard work in preparing a zero draft of the Pact for the Future. The comprehensive draft reflected the priorities of Member States and was premised on the belief that the future should be centred on people and their legitimate aspirations for well-being. However, there was still much work to be done to accelerate the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and ensure that the Summit was a step towards a more prosperous and secure future. Member States and stakeholders should therefore be bolder and more ambitious during the negotiations on the text. The document should go beyond reiterating commitments and reflect a real sense of urgency. After all, humanity was facing challenges that could not be overcome without robust international cooperation, respect for multilateralism and a strengthened United Nations. The thematic chapters should contain more than just general comments. The consultations in the coming week should be used to produce concrete proposals with specific timelines for the transformation of each of the chapters.

63. **Mr. Rae** (Canada) said that it was important to move beyond voluntary national review reports with no particular form and establish a standard, objective process whereby Governments answered certain questions and provided a certain degree of measurement. That would allow Governments not only to demonstrate what they had done but also to provide clear responses about what needed to be done and how

much further there was to go. If such information could not be gleaned from the reports, progress would have to be assessed another way. The critical problem with many agreements was that they were not enforceable and it was difficult to assess progress. It was therefore important to establish a common approach to assessing progress. It was also important to acknowledge that the Sustainable Development Goals applied to each and every nation State; they were not simply being imposed on developing countries from on high. Each of their aspects, from reducing emissions to building resilience, must be tackled together.

64.   **Ms. Davis** (Observer for Man Up Campaign US) said that she wondered whether, if a multi-stakeholder approach were taken involving young people, citizens, educators, scientists, United Nations agencies, Governments and the private sector, it would be possible to develop a model for taking care of an entire country that could be adapted to each country. Such a model would require an understanding of the needs of citizens, the relevant macro- and microfinance aspects, and the infrastructure needed to address the digital divide. She asked how banking and taxation could be used to hold the private sector accountable in putting such a model into action.

65.   **Mr. Gbonjubola** (Co-Chair of the Committee of Experts on International Cooperation in Tax Matters) said that, when a tax base was designed cooperatively, it was easy for everyone to stick to their part of the bargain, whereas when tax rules were handed down, it was difficult for those who had not been involved in making the rules to enforce them. As part of the international cooperation on tax issues at the United Nations, every nation, no matter its level of development or the size of its economy, came together to cooperatively design a system that worked for all. Such a system was self-policing and did not require any nation to be pushed to fulfil its obligations. Similarly, illicit financial flows could be stamped out if all countries worked together to agree on rules for the movement of funds and implemented them without selectivity.

66.   **Mr. Powell** (Director of the New York Office of the International Monetary Fund (IMF)) said that there was no simple answer to the issue of corruption in governance. All countries were working to address illicit tax flows and establish clear regulations. IMF was working with individual countries on the ground to help with enforcement, tax administration and transparency.

67.   Before the COVID-19 pandemic, IMF had estimated that, while low-income countries would need significant additional financing to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals, most middle-income countries could finance the additional spending needed to achieve them through domestic revenue mobilization. For many middle-income countries, raising an extra 3 to 5 per cent of GDP in revenue and reorganizing budgets a little could make a massive difference in achieving the Goals. Raising taxes was not easy politically and would need to be supplemented by fiscal stimulus, but so much of achieving the Goals was dependent on domestic policy.

68.   **Ms. Fukuda-Parr** (Professor of International Affairs at The New School and Chair of the Committee for Development Policy) said that the voluntary national reviews had been one of the successes of the 2030 Agenda, but much more effective use should be made of that instrument. Progress towards many of the Sustainable Development Goals was going backwards; what was needed, therefore, was not acceleration, but rather a change in direction. Lessons must be learned from what countries had been doing in order to do things not only better but also differently. Many of the voluntary national review reports were several hundred pages long. It might be better for countries to produce, for example, a more focused 10-page issues paper with a 10-page action plan. In addition to the lengthiness of the reports, the lack of continuity between reports was cause for concern. Countries often submitted second reports in which they made no reference to the measures described in their first report. Serious thought should be given to developing a new approach to the voluntary national reviews.

69.   On the issues of domestic resource mobilization and fair taxation, no one had mentioned the issue of debt. Dozens of countries were in, or at risk of falling into, debt distress and were unable to get out of it because of accumulated debt. The Committee for Development Policy had found, through its studies on debt, that the existing multilateral mechanisms were not adequate for responding to the debt crisis facing many countries.

70.   **Ms. Saulo** (Secretary-General of the World Meteorological Organization (WMO)) said that science provided clear evidence that carbon dioxide emissions were increasing, despite the commitments made by countries. Science could be used to measure different variables to see whether the Sustainable Development Goals would be achieved. The world was not going in the right direction and needed to be bolder and more ambitious.

71.   **Mr. Singh Gill** (Envoy of the Secretary-General on Technology) said that science, technology and innovation were the foundations of future growth.

Countries that did not invest in innovation and in building human capital around emerging technologies would undermine future growth, be vulnerable to boom-and-bust cycles and be less resilient to global shocks. Investments in green technologies and smart grids and in moving towards a circular economy were needed. Behavioural change in terms of consumption patterns was also needed and would require engagement with large numbers of people in both the global North and the global South. None of that could be done without technology. Given the cross-border nature of technology, international digital cooperation was needed. To promote innovation for the Sustainable Development Goals, rather than trying to find a solution and then seeing if it could be scaled up, it would be better to look at what already worked at scale. More diverse participation in science, technology and innovation and in solving problems related to the Sustainable Development Goals could have effects at a global scale.

Closing of the segment

72. **Mr. Li** Junhua (Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs) said that, over the past two days, the Council had addressed a broad spectrum of issues pertinent to advancing the 2030 Agenda. During the presentations and discussions, the shared commitment to ending poverty, combating inequalities and building peaceful societies had been reiterated.

73. Global economic challenges threatened progress towards the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals, with tight financing conditions, debt vulnerabilities and slowing trade forecast for 2024. Geopolitical tensions and the risks of extreme weather posed a further threat.

74. The gap between developed and developing economies was widening. Historically high food prices and the high cost of living remained a particular concern for countries in vulnerable situations. Developing economies faced subdued growth, high unemployment and stagnant wages. Increased investments in education, health and infrastructure were therefore needed.

75. Governments must pursue innovation and green transitions to support sustainable growth, employment and livelihoods. International cooperation must be geared towards helping economies in vulnerable fiscal situations to shift towards inclusive sustainable development. Commitments must be translated into concrete policies, budgets and investment portfolios. Timely and high-quality data remained fundamental to measuring progress. Immediate action was crucial to accelerate the achievement of the 2030 Agenda beyond the current 15 per cent implementation rate.

76. The recommendations made during the coordination segment would inform collective efforts towards a more inclusive, resilient and sustainable future. They would also inform the discussions in the lead-up to and during the high-level political forum on sustainable development and the Summit of the Future.

77. **The President** said that, during the coordination segment, a diverse array of issues critical to expediting the implementation of the 2030 Agenda had been addressed. Fruitful discussions had been held on advancing the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals, with a focus on Goals 1, 2, 13, 16 and 17, which would be under review at the high-level political forum on sustainable development in July 2024. The links between those and other Goals, and between those Goals and major trends such as technological advancements and population dynamics, had been front and centre throughout the segment.

78. In the discussions, the interconnectedness of urgent action to eradicate poverty and hunger and to develop a sustainable food system had been highlighted, while stressing the need to recognize interlinkages with climate action and to adopt gender-responsive, evidence-based policies. The need to build strong, effective and just institutions and to rebuild social and political trust in institutions had also been emphasized as a foundation of peace and sustainable development.

79. The Council had discussed the need to implement agreements in a coordinated manner to ensure that no resource was wasted. The implementation of climate goals could be accelerated through gender-responsive climate action. Recognizing non-economic loss and damage in climate finance was a critical aspect of that approach. Science, technology and innovation would be fundamental in furthering those efforts. Closing the digital gap and developing artificial intelligence governance mechanisms would create safe digital spaces free of discrimination and hate, and enable the benefits of the digital era to be harnessed responsively and effectively by all. Achieving a greener future required resilient infrastructure, technology acquisition, capacity-building, the coordination of international partners and reform of the international financial system. Increased investment in climate action would enhance countries' resilience to climate shocks and reduce the risks of climate-related conflicts.

80. The executive secretaries of regional commissions and the Chairs of functional commissions and expert bodies had described their efforts to strengthen global efforts in crime prevention, the rule of law and equal

access to justice; to transform public sector institutions through data-driven decision-making and inclusive policies to enhance governance and social justice; to harness the power of science, technology and innovation to overcome developmental challenges, close the gender digital divide and promote equitable growth; to address demographic dynamics and climate change; and to promote international cooperation in tax matters, the safe management and transport of chemicals, accessible data for informed decision-making, and economic, social and cultural rights.

81. The Council had stressed the need for an international financial system that created the conditions for countries to implement sustainable and coherent policies to achieve the Goals. The high level of debt barriers to participation in supply chains and trade, and resources drained by illicit financial flows and other forms of transnational organized crime were issues that must be addressed. International mechanisms were needed to promote the diffusion and sharing of technology, especially for developing countries.

82. Fostering partnerships and dialogue was critical to taking urgent action and accelerating the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. The past two days of discussions had shown that it was possible to elevate global cooperation and work together to achieve the Goals. In the lead-up to the Summit of the Future, it was imperative to bolster international solidarity and strengthen coordinated efforts to address the multiple challenges facing the world. The Council's deliberations and recommendations would contribute significantly to the discussions and outcomes of the Summit and would pave the way for major breakthroughs towards creating a better and sustainable world.

The meeting rose at 5.55 p.m.