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Empowering people and ensuring inclusiveness and equality

Synthesis of voluntary submissions by functional commissions of the Economic and Social Council and other intergovernmental bodies and forums

Note by the Secretariat

The present document provides a synthesis of the voluntary submissions prepared by functional commissions of the Economic and Social Council and other intergovernmental bodies and forums. Contributions were provided in response to the invitation of the President of the Council contained in her letter dated 30 October 2018 addressed to the Chairs of those bodies, in which she requested that they offer substantive input to the high-level political forum on sustainable development, highlighting their contributions towards the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for

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Sustainable Development.[1] The integral texts of the submissions received for the present synthesis report are available on the forum's website.[2]

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[1] The present document has benefited from contributions received from the following functional commissions and expert bodies of the Economic and Social Council: Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice; Commission on Narcotic Drugs; Commission on Population and Development; Commission on Science and Technology for Development; Commission on the Status of Women; Committee for Development Policy; Committee of Experts on Public Administration; Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues; United Nations Forum on Forests; United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names; and Statistical Commission; the following regional commissions: Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean; and Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific; the following United Nations intergovernmental and related bodies: Basel Convention on the Control of Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes and their Disposal; Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities; Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights; Committee on Enforced Disappearances; Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women; Committee on the Rights of the Child; Committee on World Food Security; Convention on Biological Diversity; Human Rights Council; Industrial Development Board of the United Nations Industrial Development Organization; International Civil Aviation Organization; International Labour Organization; International Organization for Migration; International Renewable Energy Agency; International Telecommunication Union Administrative Council; Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights; Partnership on Measuring ICT for Development; Peacebuilding Commission; Ramsar Convention on Wetlands; Rotterdam Convention on the Prior Informed Consent Procedure for Certain Hazardous Chemicals and Pesticides in International Trade; Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants; Vienna Convention for the Protection of the Ozone Layer and the Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer; United Nations Capital Development Fund; United Nations Environment Assembly; United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) International Hydrological Programme; UNESCO Sustainable Development Goal Education 2030 Steering Committee; Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations and its technical and intergovernmental bodies; United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change; United Nations Group on the Information Society; United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction; United Nations System Standing Committee on Nutrition; United Nations Volunteers; World Bank Group; World Health Organization Framework Convention on Tobacco Control; World Heritage Committee; World Intellectual Property Organization; and World Trade Organization; and the following other intergovernmental bodies: Central European Initiative; Global Forum on Migration and Development; Global Partnership for Effective Development Cooperation; Inter-Parliamentary Union; International Commission on Financing Global Education Opportunity; Intergovernmental Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services; International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies; International Union for Conservation of Nature; Islamic Development Bank Group; League of Arab States; Universal Postal Union; and World Water Council.

[2] See https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/inputs/.

I. Introduction

1.   The high-level political forum on sustainable development plays a central role in overseeing a network of follow-up and review processes at the global level. In line with paragraph 82 of General Assembly resolution 70/1, entitled "Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development", the forum facilitates the sharing of experiences, including successes, challenges and lessons learned. It also provides political leadership, guidance and recommendations for follow-up and promotes the system-wide coherence and coordination of sustainable development policies.

2.   In the same resolution, the General Assembly called for thematic reviews of progress on the Sustainable Development Goals, including with regard to cross-cutting issues, to take place at the high-level political forum. In accordance with existing mandates, the forum's review of progress, global achievements and challenges is supported by the reviews of the functional commissions of the Economic and Social Council and other intergovernmental bodies and forums, which should reflect the integrated nature of the Goals and the interlinkages between them.

3.   The President of the Council therefore invited the functional commissions and expert bodies of the Economic and Social Council and other intergovernmental bodies and forums, including global platforms and intergovernmental organization-driven mechanisms that contribute to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, to submit contributions in that regard. In her letter dated 30 October 2018,[3] the President of the Council encouraged recipients to share relevant input and deliberations on the theme of the 2019 high-level political forum, "Empowering people and ensuring inclusiveness and equality," and the Sustainable Development Goals under review.

4.   The present document synthesizes the 62 voluntary submissions received as at 23 April 2019[4] and does not suggest a formal reporting link to the forum or modify any entity's mandate or governance. It reflects how the intergovernmental bodies are responding to the theme of the 2019 high-level political forum, including the lessons learned, gaps and challenges and emerging issues identified, as well as the recommendations developed, by the entities.

II. Assessment of the situation regarding the principle of ensuring that no one is left behind

5.   The principle of leaving no one behind is widely referred to, and the following five main areas have been identified as crucial to empowering those who are being left behind.

A. Economic vulnerability

6.   In a significant share of the least developed countries, economic vulnerability has increased in recent years. People are being pushed further behind by a variety of forces, including globalization, technological developments, the absence of adequate social protections, gender inequality, climate change and environmental degradation that leads to loss of access to land, livelihoods and jobs.

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[3] See https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/22586Letter_ of_ECOSOC_Presdient_to_IG_bodies_contribution_to_2019_HLPF_rev.pdf.

[4] Contributions received after 23 April are available at https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/inputs/.

7.   The income gap between the richest and poorest countries remains large. Least developed countries remain far behind, with income per capita at 4 per cent of the average for developed countries. Although availability of data is limited, there are significant inequalities in access to and control over renewable natural resources.

8.   Ensuring that no one is left behind requires not only strong social policies but the integration of the principle in the formulation of macroeconomic, fiscal industrial and technological policies and strategies in other relevant areas. An inclusive economy and equitable fiscal policy can mitigate economic and social disparities and be a source of empowerment.

9.   The extremely poor suffer from a range of constraints that limit their capacity to benefit from the gains from trade. Farmers and firms in rural areas face high transport costs and delays when shipping to international and national markets. Globally, more than 80 per cent of rural smallholders operate in local and domestic markets, with limited capacity to contribute to household income and national economic growth.

10.   Many millions more employment opportunities must be created with effective access to rights and the application of standards. Working poverty has been falling but remains widespread in some regions. Those working in the informal sector have limited access to finance to smooth over short-term economic fluctuations and face greater risks than those engaged in formal activities. Given that the poor are disproportionally employed in less secure jobs, deregulation and technological progress tend to reduce their income share. Regulatory agencies are sometimes dominated by the interests of those they are intended to regulate, rather than the public interest, whereas corporate taxation may result in uneven division of burdens.

11.   The space in which workers, farmers, indigenous peoples and communities practice collective bargaining continues to contract. The benefits of economic activity are increasingly concentrated in fewer hands, and its social and environmental costs are borne by the most vulnerable.

12.   Those in rural areas, the poor and members of ethnolinguistic minority groups and other disadvantaged populations are furthest behind in terms of access to high-quality education and educational outcomes. Discrimination in education policies, practices and resource allocation exacerbates socioeconomic inequalities.

B.   Conflicts, disasters and inequality

13.   Although there are promising initiatives aimed at empowering people, the current trends instead point towards disempowerment and increasing inequality. Social security is declining, and the externalities of globalization are inadequately regulated. Large and intensive conflicts persist.

14.   At least half of the world's poor may be living in fragile and conflict-affected settings by 2030. If conflict and fragility are not addressed through interdimensional political-administrative models, they are likely to spill over, jeopardizing institutional and policy initiatives aimed at leaving no one behind.

15.   When migration occurs involuntarily or irregularly, it can increase migrants' vulnerability to violence, abuse and exploitation. Migrants can find themselves in difficult situations with lack of, or partial access to, assistance and basic services, and they are too often at risk of being marginalized within society.

16.   The negative consequences of disasters, climate change and conflict can often be mutually reinforcing. Disasters amplify the risk of being left behind for those who are ill-equipped to prevent, respond to and recover from disasters. Accessible support

services are required for all persons with disabilities, in particular in post-disaster reconstruction efforts.

C. Resource use

17. The continued loss of biodiversity and the degradation of healthy ecosystems will have negative effects on inclusiveness and equality at various levels, leaving vulnerable populations even further behind. Indigenous communities represent about 5 per cent of the world's population but make up 15 per cent of the world's extreme poor. Conserving the integrity and diversity of nature is predicated upon the recognition of and ability to address the inequalities that drive unsustainable practices.

18. Some 3 billion family farmers, fishers, foresters, pastoralists and indigenous peoples produce three quarters of the world's food, are the stewards of natural resources and manage 85 per cent of the planet's food biodiversity. However, they make up 80 per cent of the global poor and are the ones most affected by climate change, conflict, disease and market shocks.

19. Globally, two out of every five people lack access to controlled waste disposal facilities and are therefore exposed to environmental and associated health risks. Measures for more effective adaptation to ecosystem degradation are required.

20. Forests and trees provide around 20 per cent of income for rural households in developing countries, populations which tend to be marginally integrated in value chains, limiting their potential contributions to the economy. Secure land and forest tenure rights provide a critical foundation for ensuring that no one is left behind.

21. The conservation and wise management of cultural and natural heritage can address many of the challenges facing the poorest and those who are most vulnerable, providing shelter and access to food, water, means of livelihood and decent employment. Well-preserved heritage is an essential component of the dignity and resilience of disadvantaged communities, however, most countries have not yet developed policies to integrate a sustainable development perspective into their heritage management strategies.

D. Improving social integration

22. Systemic discrimination may arise because of legal rules, policies or practices or from predominant cultural attitudes and customary practices that create relative disadvantages for some groups and privileges for others. Social integration is closely linked to level of cultural growth, civic sense and to diversity management capacities.

23. Children continue to disproportionately suffer from the effects of poverty and social isolation. Evidence shows that the discrimination, stigma, prejudice, preconceived notions, superstition, lack of knowledge, lack of awareness, unequal opportunities and institutional, physical, communication, legal and attitudinal barriers that persons with disabilities encounter worldwide place them among those left behind.

24. The impact of climate change and shrinking access to natural resources push indigenous peoples into the informal economy. Leveraging indigenous peoples' traditional occupations and knowledge to sustain livelihoods and create green jobs at the local level can directly contribute to tackling inequality and climate change mitigation and adaption.

25. All countries have populations that experience multiple forms of malnutrition. The degree of malnutrition, however, depends largely upon gender, age, income, ethnicity and geographical location. Overweight and obesity have increased in all countries, regardless of income level.

26. The poorest and most marginalized are more likely to consume tobacco and at younger ages. Tobacco use is rising rapidly in many low- and middle-income countries, and those belonging to disadvantaged groups face difficulties in gaining access to essential health services and information. The lack of data disaggregated by relevant factors makes it harder to identify the most vulnerable.

E. Empowering women and girls

27. Issues that continue to require urgent attention include the feminization of poverty, gender gaps in education, violence against women and girls, unequal sharing of unpaid care and domestic work, resource gaps and lack of gender-responsive data collection. Economic inequalities continue to have a disproportionately negative impact on women. Women and girls continue to face structural barriers, owing to the persistence of historical and structural unequal power relations between women and men, poverty and persistent inequalities.

28. Women and girls face intersecting and multiple forms of discrimination hindering their full participation in decision-making processes, access to employment and credit facilities, property ownership and educational and vocational training opportunities. Women and young people are disproportionately underrepresented in national parliaments. Efforts should be made to accelerate legal and policy interventions through a holistic approach that targets not only those fields in which women and girls are disadvantaged but also education, given that it remains an environment in which discriminatory gender stereotypes abound.

29. Women continue to experience numerous difficulties in gaining access to justice and legal complaint mechanisms, the political, economic and cultural ramifications of which is a curtailing of their roles as actors and beneficiaries of development. Discriminatory personal status laws continue to impede equality in marriage, divorce and inheritance matters. Women and girls also continue to be subjected to gender-based violence, including domestic violence and enforced disappearances.

30. Progress has been made in access for women and girls to social protection, public services and sustainable infrastructure, in particular in the areas of health and education. However, significant challenges and gender gaps remain and, in some contexts, progress could be undermined by budget cuts and austerity measures.

III. Gaps and challenges likely to affect inclusiveness and equality and the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals

31. In the fourth year of implementation of the 2030 Agenda, progress is insufficient. High rates of inequalities are part of a self-reinforcing system and persist in multiple dimensions at all levels. In many cases, policies, legislation and investments fail to consider the potential trade-offs required of, and impacts on, other sectors, groups of people and countries, as well as future generations.

32. With the prevailing siloed manner of thinking, many public sector organizations lack awareness of the Sustainable Development Goals and the resources, skills and holistic approach for their implementation. Even where adequate plans are in place,

their application may be lagging or missing. The gaps and challenges likely to affect the achievement of the 2030 Agenda are therefore similar to those in previous years, suggesting that enhanced efforts are required to overcome systemic issues impeding the transformation towards sustainable development that benefits all.

A. Cross-cutting and emerging issues

Food insecurity

33. Evidence signals a rise in world hunger and a reversal of trends, after a prolonged decline. In addition to persistent inequalities, climate change is undermining all dimensions of food security. If equal access to nutritious and adequate diets is to be ensured, the interlinked challenges must be tackled simultaneously and the interdependence of rural and urban areas for food and basic services must be understood.

34. Food insecurity contributes to undernutrition, as well as to overweight and obesity, and high rates of those forms of malnutrition coexist in many countries. The higher cost of nutritious foods, the stress of living with food insecurity and physiological adaptation to food restriction help to explain why food-insecure families may have a higher risk of overweight and obesity, increasing the risk of noncommunicable diseases. Awareness-raising activities are required to help people to understand the health and environmental impacts of their diets. Food systems must move towards mostly plant-based dietary patterns, dramatically reduce food losses and waste and improve food production practices.

Disaster risk

35. Climate change threatens to push more than 100 million people back into poverty by 2030. Urgent action to halt climate change, while building countries' resilience to its adverse effects, is integral to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. That interlinked relationship also provides the biggest opportunity for positive, systemic change.

36. Climate change is expected to increase disaster-related displacement, in particular in developing countries, owing to lack of early warning systems and the poor construction of homes. Further work is needed to integrate disaster risk considerations into sectoral laws, building codes, policies and plans. Displacement prevention actions must be integrated into national and local disaster risk reduction and development strategies and into humanitarian contingency planning.

37. Economic losses to disasters increasingly undermine the financing available for sustainable development. Current approaches to disaster risk financing that focus on risk transfer and contingency funds rarely cover the frequent losses from small-scale disasters, which increasingly erode the resilience of the poorest populations.

38. Disaster risk financing plays a key role in protecting fiscal balances and financing recovery and reconstruction. Tailored financing instruments are needed to implement disaster risk reduction strategies and to create the fiscal space to enable countries to invest in resilience. It is vital that integrated national financing frameworks and pipelines of investable projects for the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals are risk-informed and accompanied by disaster risk reduction financing instruments.

Degradation of ecosystems

39. Currently, land degradation through human activities is having a negative impact on the well-being of at least 3.2 billion people, pushing the planet towards a

sixth mass species extinction and costing more than 10 per cent of the annual gross world product in loss of biodiversity and ecosystem services. Although the rate of deforestation has slowed in many regions, tree cover loss has steadily been rising in the tropics since 2000, owing to human and natural causes.

40. Conserving, restoring and sustainably managing the planet's ecosystems can provide practical and effective nature-based solutions through climate action and livelihood support, contributing to disaster risk reduction and peacebuilding strategies. Benefits of biodiversity are especially important to poor and vulnerable groups, for which the goods and services derived from biodiversity constitute social safety nets.

41. The contributions of biodiversity to sustainable development continue to be underestimated in policy planning and economic activities, as well as in official economic data and statistics, in many countries. In the valuation of biodiversity, the commodification of those contributions of nature, in particular relating to peoples' cultures and identities, must be avoided, in favour of respecting the diverse holders of cultural values that do not see their cultures as appropriate for commerce and value-based trade-off analyses.

42. Societal transformation and behavioural change are required if the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity are to be achieved. Indigenous peoples hold and manage a significant part of the Earth's most biodiverse regions and play a vital role in conserving ecosystems. There is a significant amount of the traditional knowledge of indigenous peoples and local communities that is relevant to the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity.

43. Although future trade-offs between some of nature's contributions to people may be inevitable, the severity of the trade-offs may be mitigated by timely, progressive and proactive policy interventions and environmental safeguards based on evidence and by mainstreaming environmental issues into all socioeconomic sectors. Analysis of different scenarios can help policymakers to make better decisions for the preservation of biodiversity.

44. Biodiversity-related official development assistance has steadily increased, yet it will likely only ever cover a small percentage of the investments needed. Current investments in biodiversity take place primarily in developed countries, whereas the largest loss is now in developing countries. Suitable risk mitigation, appropriate metrics and practical tools to assess the impact, the scaling of agreements and legal and policy approaches must be deployed to mobilize private sector investment in nature conservation.

Unsustainable resource use

45. Wetlands are indispensable for the ecosystem services that they provide, in particular regarding water, food and energy security. Because water cuts across many sectors, it has a critical role to play in climate change mitigation and adaptation. That interlinkage is often underrecognized, with limited access to climate finance for water-related projects, notwithstanding opportunities for resource recovery and greenhouse gas emission reductions.

46. Capacity-building in the water sector is a critical cross-cutting topic, as is the participation of stakeholders in water-related decision-making processes. Investments in water infrastructure rarely include a predefined percentage for capacity-building. Building on traditional knowledge is also crucial to ensuring sustainable water and sanitation services.

47. Existing water assessments are often inadequate or incomplete for sound decision-making in terms of balancing the various uses of water and adapting to

increasing climatic variability. Those gaps must be filled to further strengthen policies and strategies in the water domain at all levels. Adequate technologies are available for water resources management but often unknown by all actors and end-users. Although technological progress enables developing countries to leapfrog into modernity more quickly, its benefits are unequally shared.

48. Affordable wastewater treatment technologies to remove antibiotic residues are not currently available. Antibiotic-resistant infections are projected to become one of the main causes of death worldwide by 2050. Investments in new technologies could have huge benefits, however, conscious efforts should be made to ensure that those technologies are accessible to all.

49. Given the increase in hazardous and household waste generated worldwide, environmentally sound management of hazardous wastes and their disposal is required. The burning of waste is considered the main source of unintentional persistent organic pollutants. Many countries also lack infrastructure and the capacity to assess and manage the risks posed by widely produced and traded hazardous chemicals.

50. Moreover, marine plastic litter and microplastics require urgent global action. Inadequate and inefficient waste management practices are commonplace, compounded by a lack of viable and effective recycling techniques and strategies. Resource efficiency and sustainability of plastics must be improved, towards a circular economy.

51. Exposure to environmental health risks is unequally distributed and is often related to socioeconomic characteristics. It is estimated that excessive exposure to, and inappropriate use of, hazardous pesticides contribute to poisoning a minimum of 3 million people annually, with impoverished rural workers being especially affected.

Migration dynamics

52. Climate change, environmental degradation and migration are deeply intertwined. Twice as many people are displaced annually by natural disasters as by conflict and violence, a phenomenon that is expected to grow as climate risks continue to intensify. Migration dynamics are an aggregation of thousands of individual, context-specific decisions that are often poorly understood. Unravelling how macrodevelopments affect micromovements, and vice versa, will be key to ensuring that policies can remain effective, supportive and globally coherent.

53. The ability to move is not equally shared. Those among the skilled, middle class and the global north will find it easy to remain mobile, whereas opportunities may further diminish for those with fewer skills, accessible channels or financial means. The world in which people move is also rapidly changing. Technology has created new opportunities for connecting populations and identifying them more efficiently, however, the management of data security and privacy must be carefully addressed.

54. Women and girls are subjected to various human rights violations in the context of migration. Migrant smuggling routes affect every part of the world and expose migrants to a range of risks. Providing safe humanitarian spaces and supporting basic services for migrants in irregular migration patterns is necessary to prevent members of that group from falling into high-risk contexts. Improvements in ethical recruitment practices and the elimination of recruitment fees would help to address issues such as trafficking in persons, debt bondage and forced labour. Given that many migrants work in informal or hidden sectors, measures are required to address vulnerabilities, abuses and exploitation.

55. Inequality is a common driver of migration. At the same time, migrants are particularly affected by inequality. Migrants can contribute to overcoming inequality

and be agents of sustainable development in countries of origin and destination. Consistent, accessible education and training activities are a key component of larger programming that encompasses the integration, reintegration, stabilization and social cohesion of migrants and communities.

Rapid urbanization

56. Available rural employment opportunities are often precarious, poorly remunerated and may be hazardous, which can trap workers and their families in a vicious cycle of hunger and poverty and push rural populations to migrate.

57. Cities are growing at a rapid pace, placing huge demands on infrastructure, services, job creation and the environment. Urban growth is not limited to capital cities but is also having a profound impact on secondary cities and towns. With the majority of international migrants and displaced populations concentrating in cities, the pressure on local authorities and resources is mounting. Rapidly expanding cities are fragile ecosystems, the challenges of which may be exacerbated when job growth does not keep pace with population growth or environmental change threatens livelihoods.

58. Local and regional authorities play an essential role in the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals, yet they remain ill-equipped in terms of capacities and financial resources. Decentralized levels of governance must be empowered to carry forward the 2030 Agenda in ways that are responsive to their local contexts.

Drug use

59. Both the range of drugs and drug markets are expanding and diversifying as never before. By threatening the rule of law and governance in general, the illicit drug economy is undermining efforts to achieve Sustainable Development Goal 16. Record high levels of manufacturing and trafficking of opiates and cocaine also increase global illicit financial flows related to drugs and violence in producing and consuming countries. The development of viable economic alternatives is key to addressing illicit drug-related activities.

60. Poverty, unemployment, poor quality education, domestic violence and social disadvantage are vulnerabilities linked to social development that can be conducive to drug and tobacco use. The level of global coverage of treatment for drug use disorder remains low. Efforts aimed at prevention, early intervention and treatment, care, recovery and rehabilitation with regard to substance abuse must be strengthened. Access for many people worldwide to controlled medicines, narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances remains limited.

Future of work

61. The world of work is undergoing major and an increasing number of transformational changes, and education and training systems must become more flexible and diversified in terms of learning options and pathways. Today, 40 per cent of employers globally are finding it difficult to recruit young people who possess the skills needed. The skills mismatch should be addressed by aligning the curricula of education and training institutions more closely with labour market needs. Enhanced social dialogue at various levels is required to strengthen investment in training and policies, including work-based skills development schemes. The investments that Governments make today in their human capital, including among migrant groups, will determine future success in that regard.

62.	Unemployment is particularly critical among young people, undermining their prospects for on-the-job skills acquisition, future employability and future earnings. Stronger alignment between inclusive employment and inclusive education and skills policies is required. Failure to provide good jobs for young people is not only a missed opportunity, but also raises significant social risks, potentially contributing to fragility and to large-scale migration of the youth cohort in search of better opportunities.

63.	The terms of employment are becoming ever more flexible, and in some cases precariously so. To succeed, citizens across the world must become more adaptable, resilient and ready to take on several careers. How to learn will become as important as what to learn.

Insufficient statistical capacity

64.	Insufficient statistical capacity remains one of the key challenges for achieving the 2030 Agenda. The lack of comprehensive, reliable data and statistics is an underlying challenge in many areas, including demographic data. Responsive national statistical programmes and the provision of necessary data in a timely manner are required. An urgent update is needed to address the economic-social-environmental nexus in order to truly depict and carry out the 2030 Agenda.

65.	More and better statistics on access to and use of information and communications technology can inform policies to reduce the digital divide. In that regard, further development of statistics, disaggregated by gender, in the following areas is required in order to adequately monitor progress: use of information and communications technology; its use by persons with disabilities, its use by members of marginalized communities, its use by government for access to information and services; its use in the area of education; its use in the area of health; and e-waste.

66.	To supplement national statistical systems, countries must leverage new data sources and the private sector, including data generated by machines, artificial intelligence, data flows and the Internet of things, to ensure that relevant information on information and communications technology indicators included in the Sustainable Development Goals is produced and made available.

67.	The use of big data will also entail addressing data protection, privacy and security, as well as protocols for data-sharing between private sources and national statistical offices. Balancing the protection of confidentiality and the openness of data is critical, in addition to carefully addressing the societal challenges of trust, ethics, privacy, confidentiality and security of data. Biased big data may produce unintended or discriminatory results. There are also significant questions about data ownership and access regarding agriculture, in particular in developing countries.

## B.	Sustainable Development Goals in focus

68.	Although all Sustainable Development Goals are examined through the lens of the theme of the 2019 session of the high-level political forum, some entities focused their contributions on the specific set of goals under review in 2019.

Sustainable Development Goal 4: quality education and lifelong learning

69.	Societal inequality shapes education inequality. Many children are excluded from schooling, the promising pattern of schooling expansion over the past decade notwithstanding, with gender parity being far from realized. In recent years, out-of-school rates have almost stagnated, or have increased in most marginalized or conflict zones, and tend to be significantly higher in rural, compared with urban, households.

In low- and middle-income countries, half of the estimated 65 million primary and lower secondary school-aged children with disabilities are out-of-school.

70. For far too many children, schooling does not equal learning. Education systems universally face significant quality challenges and often replicate or exacerbate existing inequalities. Many countries do not assess learning outcomes systematically, and the information that is available is rarely used to inform policy and practice.

71. In many countries, access to education, and the quality thereof, is strongly linked to financial resources, at both the government and household levels. Progressive universalism requires expanding the provision of high-quality education for everyone, while prioritizing the needs of the poor and disadvantaged. There have been improvements in terms of reading and writing skills and a steady reduction in gender gaps in recent decades. However, literacy rates are lowest in sub-Saharan Africa and southern Asia and intergenerational disparities remain.

72. Across regions, sub-Saharan Africa faces the biggest challenge, with the lowest percentages of trained teachers. Since national teacher education programmes differ widely in terms of content, duration and qualification levels, national minimum teacher qualifications and training standards also vary.

73. Participation in early childhood education is an integral part of children's right to education and is key to their achieving their full potential and holistic development. It also facilitates children's readiness for subsequent stages of school and their future learning experiences. Participation in organized learning, however, remains far from being universal.

74. There are also large differences between regions in the participation of young people and adults in formal and non-formal education, technical and vocational education and training and higher education. The participation of those who are 15 to 24 years of age in technical-vocational programmes is relatively low. Globally, the gross enrolment ratio for tertiary education is at 38 per cent, but participation varies considerably by region.

75. Information and communications technologies are powering a revolution in digital learning, which can help to break down economic barriers, the divides between rural and urban and the gender divide. An international framework on quality assurance and accreditation of degrees would enhance the potential of information and communications technology services. Enhanced trade in education services may help to increase capacity in providing high-quality education. Many countries place high tariff rates on teaching materials, representing one of the largest expenses on education by households.

76. Education should be aimed at increasing awareness among young people and consumers of their potential contribution to the achievement of sustainable development. Nearly all countries report that the principles of education for sustainable development and global citizenship education are fully or partially reflected in their education policies and in school curricula. However, insufficient teacher training is an obstacle.

77. Holistic approaches in youth crime prevention, including in education, are crucial to mainstreaming crime prevention into socioeconomic policies and programmes. Attacks on students, personnel and institutions threaten education in many parts of the world. Policies of zero tolerance of sexual harassment within schools in nationally led systems and policies to address gender-based violence inside and in the vicinity of schools, as well as community-based responses to preserving or improving the safety of schools, are required.

78.   Education in situations of emergency is an important challenge worldwide. Countries affected by armed conflict record the highest out-of-school rates globally. Education is at risk of being underfunded, to the detriment of children caught in protracted crisis situations.

Sustainable Development Goal 8: decent work and sustainable growth

79.   A lack of education puts people at risk of not being able to acquire decent work that respects fundamental human and labour rights. Recognizing that the skills needed for access to decent work are not clearly established, those with more education generally enjoy better labour conditions. Empowerment through skills and training can be an essential element in economic diversification, in particular when it enables young people, women and micro-, small and medium-sized enterprises to engage in international trade.

80.   Science, technology and innovation drive economic growth and diversification that can create employment opportunities and increase real incomes. They can also give voice to people, connect them and extend access to education and other basic services, including for the most vulnerable. Economic diversification is a gateway to economic empowerment.

81.   Addressing the needs of rural and urban populations together through territorial development approaches answers the call for transformation in the Sustainable Development Goals. Societies that are well connected, from field to city, can stimulate entrepreneurship and empower women, create decent and diverse jobs for rural young people and provide fresh and nutritious food to urban populations.

82.   Targeted investments in pro-poor growth and social protection measures are needed to stimulate entrepreneurship in rural areas and create jobs beyond agriculture. Investments, sustainable value chains and enabling frameworks must be created or strengthened to unlock agricultural contributions to enhancing economic growth and decent employment.

83.   More efforts are needed to provide persons with disabilities with decent work opportunities, and policies seeking to provide equal access to decent employment and ensuring reasonable accommodation and accessibility in the workplace are required at all levels.

84.   Economic development that does not consider the effects on ecosystem services may decrease the quality of life among vulnerable populations. Scientific advances have opened up opportunities to work with, rather than against, nature in providing for societies' needs and supporting sustainable growth.

85.   Employment in the renewable energy sector worldwide continues to grow and result in socioeconomic benefits in an increasing number of countries. Other sectors, including agriculture, building, forestry and transport, are predicted to see job growth as a result of a transition to a more resource-efficient, low-carbon economy.

86.   Capital markets that are liquid and well regulated do better at providing the longer-term financing and risk capital that are indispensable for resilient and sustainable economic growth. By connecting local issuers to a broader base of investors, they improve funding for vital infrastructure.

Sustainable Development Goal 10: reduced inequalities

87.   Although more wealth is being produced than ever before, it is increasingly concentrated in fewer hands. The eradication of poverty will not be achieved in the context of widening gulfs between rich and poor, both within and among countries. Tax havens and bank secrecy laws hamper the collection of revenue from corporate

income tax, which is vital to the funding of crucial services such as education, health and employment. Because of such practices, many countries encounter substantial revenue losses that directly hinder their capacity to collect adequate resources to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals.

88. Current trade tensions and trade-restrictive measures are increasing economic uncertainty. Recurrent and deepening economic crises exacerbate persistent inequalities. Wage inequality is a significant contributor to the overall income inequality trend worldwide. In many low-income countries, households depend on earnings from self-employment generated by low-productivity activities and in conditions of vulnerability.

89. Reducing inequalities requires legal frameworks that recognize and secure rights of access to productive resources and services for smallholders, family farmers, foresters and local communities. Policies are required to incentivize private sector engagement in sustainable market activity that is conducive to increased participation of rural actors. Efforts to increase the productivity of smallholders and family farmers will have limited impact if linkages to markets and value chains are not strengthened simultaneously. Small family farmers can also benefit from increased market transparency and better access to market information.

Sustainable Development Goal 13: climate action

90. Stresses created by climate change can create conflict or intensify tensions along existing societal fault lines. Climate change places an additional burden on the resources of the poorest Governments, further restricting their capacity to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals. Countries could benefit from collaborating to strengthen long-term contingency planning, to identify effective steps to reduce the mounting risks for infrastructure and networks underpinning global value chains and to step up efforts towards economic diversification and a just transition of the workforce.

91. Bold climate action could deliver at least $26 trillion in economic benefits through 2030. Miscommunication between the scientific community and decision-makers is a growing concern. A major risk is the underprioritization of investment at scale in protecting and engaging with poor and vulnerable citizens in the adaptation and resilience measures necessary to cope in climate crisis events.

92. Significant greenhouse gas emission reductions will only be possible through an unprecedented transformation of industrial systems and new industrial development pathways. Economic diversification, along with a just transition of the work force and creation of decent work and quality jobs, will be crucial to realising that goal. Adequate and predictable finance from public and private sources is key in that regard. Governments could de-risk investments to enable wider dissemination and use of clean, innovative technologies that, in turn, create education opportunities and reduce unemployment. Facilitation of the flow of international finance is needed to fund green investments.

93. International trade can speed up the diffusion of environmentally sound goods and services and help to stimulate local productive capacity for such goods. A larger, competitive and integrated global market reduces costs, making it easier for countries to replace outdated, polluting technologies with environmentally sound ones.

94. Action is needed to strengthen the capacities of least developed countries to seize trade opportunities in emerging green sectors. Advisory support and capacity-building are also needed to ensure that countries can effectively harness trade and trade policy to implement international environmental commitments and the

Sustainable Development Goals, which also includes employing an inclusive, gender-sensitive approach in pursuing opportunities for more sustainable trade.

95.   As the demand for mobility is growing at a fast pace, sustainable transport is attracting significant investments. If not planned well, this can result in negative climate externalities or urban congestion. Poor asset management, insufficient provision of public transport in cities and low levels of access in rural areas have yet to be addressed.

96.   Despite the cost reduction and expanded deployment of renewable energy sources and improvements in efficiency, without further stringent measures, energy-related greenhouse gas emissions will exceed the temperature targets set out in the Paris Agreement. Accurately reflecting renewable energy sector developments in nationally determined contributions is considered key for attracting investors.

97.   The design, implementation and monitoring of ecosystem-based approaches to climate change adaptation and disaster risk reduction should ensure the participation of all stakeholders, as well as recognize and support the governance, management and conservation of the territories and areas of indigenous peoples and local communities.

98.   Evidence indicates that maladaptation to climate change can be avoided by evaluating all costs and benefits for all groups in society, including future generations, and by being explicit about who the winners and losers will be and how the burdens could be better shared. Involving stakeholders in climate action is a priority for both accelerating climate actions and reducing inequalities.

99.   Migration should be recognized as an integral component in climate change policies. Strengthening resilience and the capacity to make climate-risk informed decisions and improving early warning and awareness could help to reduce disaster-related displacement.

Sustainable Development Goal 16: peaceful societies, justice and strong institutions

100. The number and scale of protracted crises and people who are displaced are on the rise, with growing humanitarian needs globally. Addressing the root causes of conflict through an inclusive approach to building and sustaining peace is therefore essential to achieving sustainable development for all.

101. Conflicts over natural resources and environmental degradation and contamination can lead to social insecurity and violence. Sustainable management of resources requires governance institutions and processes that strengthen the rights of communities over natural resources management, combating illegal exploitation and corruption and ensuring transparent decision-making on social and environmental issues. It is also critical to build capacity and guide processes to integrate social dimensions and inclusive governance into conservation programmes and initiatives.

102. Armed violence exacerbates the discrimination and exclusion faced by children. In particular, children who are vulnerable to recruitment or use in hostilities, owing to their social or economic status or gender, continue to be recruited or used in such contexts. Children also continue to be victims of attacks, with the use of indiscriminate, disproportionate or unlawful weapons and the use of siege tactics. Measures to address the root causes of violence against children include long-term programmes and adequate resources at all levels, including providing effective remedies and necessary support to children who are victims and their families.

103. Women and girls are disproportionately affected by armed conflict and adversely targeted with sexual violence. The full participation of women in peacebuilding and post-conflict reconstruction processes is key to rebuilding a society

but is often not realized. Women also face barriers in gaining access to justice, in particular in conflict and post-conflict situations. Transitional justice mechanisms in some countries have failed to fully address the gender dimension of the impact of conflict. Most pervasive forms of gender-based violence perpetrated during conflict often remain unpunished.

104. Armed conflicts and natural disasters heighten the risks faced by persons with disabilities as they seek assistance, support and protection. Where services exist, inaccessible communication strategies often exclude persons with disabilities from identifying and utilizing them. Scant data, poor identification and registration and lack of provision of reasonable accommodation compound the exclusion of persons with disabilities in crisis needs-assessments.

105. The absence of peace systematically generates new displacements and prolongs the protracted nature of displacement. In fragile and crisis contexts, migration drivers and decision-making are shaped by a constantly evolving range of factors that define the landscape of risk and opportunity for potential migrants, including the displaced.

106. Illicit trade in tobacco products undermines global prevention and control efforts. Tax evasion associated with the illegal tobacco market reduces government tax revenue. The relationship between illicit tobacco trade, public safety and governance must be addressed because illegal networks both thrive in and contribute to weak governance contexts.

107. Information and communications technologies can play an important role in crisis management, humanitarian aid delivery and peacebuilding and have proven to be a powerful aid in areas such as election monitoring. The growing use of open data by governments increases transparency, empowers citizens and helps to drive economic growth. Information and communications technologies are also essential in terms of record-keeping and tracking government data and local demographics.

108. Education is key in promoting tolerance and trust. Societies can only be sustainable if citizens feel they have a stake in shaping them. A key objective is to instil in the young and old alike the competencies required to develop a culture of democracy, human rights and participation. Education can empower vulnerable people to overcome discrimination that prevents them from getting a fair share of the fruits of overall progress.

109. At times of crisis, access to and care for heritage may help vulnerable people to recover a sense of identity, dignity and empowerment. In conflict and post-conflict situations, the acknowledgment and conservation of heritage may foster mutual recognition, tolerance and respect among different communities.

Sustainable Development Goal 17: means of implementation and global partnership

110. Global economic inequalities can be reduced through the continued engagement of Governments, civil society organizations and the private sector in facilitating donor assistance, debt cancellation and the transfer of remittances and the benefits of technological advancement. There is a need for effective engagement of the private sector in development cooperation to create sustainable solutions that leave no one behind.

111. Multi-stakeholder partnerships are critical at all levels to multiply the effect of individual initiatives and to create synergies. Key areas for partnerships include migration, combating malnutrition, biodiversity and technology. It is important to design processes with interlinkages for collaboration and cooperation as early as possible, rather than as an afterthought, to avoid the risk of duplication, which dilutes

rather than reinforces global dialogue. Integrated policies that combine efforts of multiple sectors and actors are needed.

112. Progress has been made in terms of national ownership and results orientation towards the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals. Although most countries have a mutual accountability framework in place, less than half track its implementation. Timely, relevant and accurate data on development cooperation is critical for national ownership, ensuring alignment with national priorities and reducing fragmentation.

113. International investment policies, agreements and dispute settlement provisions should be revised to safeguard the policy space necessary for the realization of human rights. Structural adjustment, austerity measures or related policies should also be designed in a way to respect the policy space for complying with international human rights standards.

IV. Lessons learned on empowering people and ensuring inclusiveness and equality

114. Contributions received highlight that empowerment and inclusion are integral to the transformations needed to address the deep-rooted inequalities and vulnerabilities spanning across the three dimensions of sustainable development.

A. Empowerment strategies

115. Empowerment is a context-specific, multi-dimensional construct, comprising both a process of increasing people's voices and institutions that enable people to exercise their rights. It can be broadly defined as expansions of an individual's freedom of choice and action to increase control over resources and decisions that affect one's life.

Individual empowerment

116. Progress in including disadvantaged groups and reducing inequality requires education systems that adopt an inclusive approach. In multi-cultural societies, addressing diversity and multiple identities should be at the heart of education strategies and curricula. The provision of education for refugees and forced migrants cannot be confined to the international humanitarian sector, but it is often provided within such a parallel system. Refugees should be fully included in national education systems and teachers should be trained to support inclusion.

117. Technical and vocational education and training that promotes decent work is key to helping to empower people. Questions of affordability must focus on the extent to which government policy helps to address inequality in access to and the outcomes of such training. Governments have a range of policy tools at their disposal, including grants, fee exemptions, loans, allowances and subsidies.

118. Efforts have been observed which provide women and girls with access to information and communications technology and incentives to remain in school. Challenges remain, however, regarding sexual harassment and violence in schools. Some countries have devised measures to ensure the re-entry into school of young mothers.

Public institutions

119. Although promoting the rule of law should be at the centre of attention in policymaking and institution-building, there is no general blueprint for reforming the public sector towards empowering people and promoting inclusive societies. Each country must build on its own governance structures, political, socioeconomic realities, local strengths and needs. Peer-to-peer learning may be useful in supporting learning from success or failure.

120. Local governments understand the needs of communities best and are central to global efforts to implement the 2030 Agenda. Promoting administrative and financial empowerment in tandem with building local government capacity can be helpful, with a focus on newly emerging skillsets for the public sector workforce. The Sustainable Development Goals should be part of the curricula of national schools of public administration. Performance-based grants channelled through existing fiscal transfer systems to local governments can be an effective instrument for national Governments in achieving climate change adaptation targets, work that can be further mainstreamed through direct access to climate funds.

121. There is growing political interest in the Sustainable Development Goals but not enough will or capacities to translate that interest into concerted action carrying forward the 17 Goals as an integrated framework. With their core legislative, oversight, budgetary and representation functions, parliaments are key to ensuring the implementation of commitments.

122. Although the Sustainable Development Goals are considered an opportunity to foster inter-parliamentary dialogue and cooperation, parliamentary ownership of the Goals remains a challenge. Parliaments seem to be weakly associated with the elaboration of specific plans for implementation of the Goals at the governmental level. Some parliaments have moved to establish Sustainable Development Goal committees, but have realized that the Goals cannot be covered by one committee alone and cut across many existing committees. In many countries, it also remains unclear whether parliament should be represented on the Government's Sustainable Development Goal coordination body, in cases in which the latter exists, or whether it should monitor the work of such bodies and hold them to account.

Whole-of-society approach

123. It is critical to increase coherent, whole-of-government approaches and regional cooperation across multiple areas. Beyond government, the participation of civil society organizations, the private sector and other stakeholders in all phases of sustainable development policymaking, planning and implementation creates ownership and helps to ensure that resources, technology and knowledge are maximized and used effectively. Such participatory governance should not only include the State and society but also markets to foster an inclusive economy.

124. Increased public participation and hearing of public voices leads to more sustainable decisions, improved service delivery, greater trust in government and more informed citizens with greater capacities. Lessons learned on public participation in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda underline the need to focus on the quality of stakeholder engagement.

B. Inclusion strategies

125. Strategies for inclusive sustainable development must consider the opportunities and challenges associated with trends in fertility, mortality and migration, which will affect the size and age structure of future populations. Although gaps remain in access

to social protection, it is recognized that it can make a critical contribution to the fulfilment of human rights for all.

Rights-based approaches

126. Several inputs underscored a rights-based approach to fostering sustainable development. Projects that have adopted rights-based approaches have been found to strengthen the social fabric in new ways, create networks of partnerships, strengthen accountability and reduce vulnerability as a structural issue rather than as a symptom of poverty. Empowering citizens through a constitutional guarantee of environmental rights is associated with improved environmental performance across the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals. Deforestation rates have been found to decline in communities that have the legal rights to their forests and government support for enforcement and management.

127. Addressing the interlinkages of human rights and climate change by applying an empowerment and inclusion approach can counteract the multiplier effects of climate change and prevent conflict. It can accelerate climate action by hastening the transition to renewable energy, promoting climate-smart agricultural practices, creating climate resilient communities and removing some of the key obstacles to realizing green economy benefits.

Decent work, financial inclusion and trade

128. Decent work for all is critical to ensuring inclusiveness. Comprehensive policies must be based on social dialogue and included in broader development frameworks, encompassing investment promotion, access to finance, employment formalization, infrastructure investment and the development of capabilities through skills development.

129. Labour market institutions are key for promoting inclusive societies and comprehensive employment policies based on tripartite dialogue and frameworks. National employment policies have shown the role of a holistic approach, including demand-side measures such as employment-friendly macroeconomic frameworks and sectoral policies to support structural transformation from low-productivity to higher productivity activities.

130. Building human and physical productive capacities, while steering structural transformation towards a greener economy, requires investment in people and in strategic physical capital in a context of social dialogue and attention to decent job creation. Access to credit for small and medium-sized enterprises is crucial for their sustainability and contribution to growth and employment, enabling them to invest in new capital, adopt new technologies and contribute to expanding workers' capabilities.

131. Financial inclusion is a critical enabler of poverty reduction and inclusive growth. There is great disparity in access to bank accounts between the poorest and richest population segments, which is compounded by a gender dimension. Several inputs highlight the contribution of the postal network to financial inclusion and literacy in rural communities, providing a more accessible remittance transfer service in many cases.

132. Global remittance flows are large and exceed traditional types of development financing. However, remittance transaction costs can be high, which lessens their impact, burdens migrants and can discourage the sending of remittances through formal channels.

133. Technological progress and trade have been key engines of global prosperity. At the same time, policymakers must ensure that benefits are spread more widely. Like

other structural change, trade can create adjustment pressures for certain segments of society. Appropriate complementary policies should ensure that trade-related adjustment costs are mitigated. Early and comprehensive policy action to improve labour mobility across sectors, regions and skills is critical.

134. Actions at the national level must be accompanied by maximizing trade opportunities for the poor at the multilateral level, including addressing distortions in agriculture to improve market access and reduce food price volatility. Modern areas of the global economy, such as services and e-commerce, should also be addressed.

Integrated approaches

135. Integrated approaches are required to overcome a siloed manner of thinking and empower people. Systemic risk management across sectors and agendas, including sustainable development, climate, displacement and migration, sustaining peace and financing, leads to maximizing the use of resources. Rights mapping further provides a systematic understanding of how climate actions can create conflict between different rights holders and draws attention to long-standing structural inequities that may have been previously ignored.

136. Ecosystem-based adaptation, nature-based solutions, disaster risk reduction and sustainable forest, agriculture, fisheries and wildlife management would provide multiple benefits and could foster synergies between the biodiversity, climate change and sustainable development agendas. Mainstreaming biodiversity into the sectors of energy and mining, infrastructure, manufacturing and processing is also essential.

Science, technology and innovation

137. Technology can support inclusion through solutions that enable financial inclusion, digital identity systems and land registration, among others. Pro-poor, inclusive and frugal approaches to innovation can incorporate marginalized and underrepresented communities as producers and beneficiaries of innovation processes in new production models that address social needs, stimulate pro-poor entrepreneurship and facilitate solidarity across groups.

138. The general upward trend in access to and use of information and communications technologies is critical. Improved information and communications technology regulation and policymaking have played a pivotal role in creating the conditions for price reductions, ensuring that the efficiency gains of higher information and communications technology adoption are partly passed on to customers. However, bridging digital divides, including disparities in infrastructure, digital access and skills, remains key for achieving an inclusive global information society. Cooperation is required to achieve universal access and connectivity, to improve security and trust in information and communications technologies and to increase capacity-building.

139. The fast reduction in the costs of frontier technologies could enable developing countries to fast track their progress towards higher wages and increasing return industries and to benefit more from global value chains. Economic diversification and transformation can be supported by policies involving smart specialization, platforms for economic discovery and incubators, accelerators and technology parks. At the same time, regulators must keep pace with advances in technology and address new regulatory frontiers, including through best practice guidelines.

140. To empower persons with specific needs through information and communications technology, activities must be developed and implemented based on their direct requirements and evolving needs. All relevant stakeholders, in particular

the end-users, must be involved from design to implementation and evaluation of those activities.

141. With the help of low-cost open-source sensors, communities can assess and monitor the risk of climate-related threats. Satellite technologies are critical for disaster preparedness and emergency response, and drones offer a low-cost approach to remote sensing with applications for land-use monitoring and rapid mapping in case of emergencies. During disasters, information is increasingly shared on social media, involving community members as first-line informants and responders. Data analytics and big data can also support emergency response. Citizen science uses new technologies to involve non-scientist citizens in the generation of new scientific knowledge, which contributes to building resilient societies.

V. Areas in which political guidance by the high-level political forum is required

142. Progress towards the implementation of the 2030 Agenda will not come on its own. The inputs received demonstrate the commitment of the various intergovernmental bodies, conventions and organizations to the shared goal of achieving sustainable development by 2030. The contributions highlight the need to seek synergies between the 2030 Agenda and the policy frameworks developed and pursued by those intergovernmental bodies. Policy dialogue will be key in this regard, focusing on the interlinkages among the various aspects of sustainable development and the contributions of a variety of stakeholders.

A. Policy coherence and synergies

143. Fostering an integrated approach to sustainable development, policy guidance emanating from the high-level political forum is expected to address issues that cut across the entire 2030 Agenda, including, among others, sustainable water management, mainstreaming chemicals and wastes management, and cultural heritage. Advancing global forest policy coherence within the United Nations system would also be required.

144. The relationship between the ambitions reflected in the 2030 Agenda and the international human rights framework is considered critical. Inputs underscore the multiple dimensions and intersectionality of inequality, in particular the link between economic and social exclusion and decision-making power. Gender-responsive implementation and follow-up to the 2030 Agenda, seeking synergies with respective international instruments on gender equality, is crucial. Similarly, the forum should ensure children's meaningful participation as active agents of change.

145. Progress has been made in strengthening global policy coherence and translating it into integrated regional and national policies for disaster risk reduction, climate change adaptation and sustainable development. However, in most countries, more efforts are required to design and implement coherent disaster risk-informed strategies, programmes or investments at the national and local levels.

146. Particular attention should be paid to the biodiversity-related and other Sustainable Development Goal targets that have endpoints in 2020, bearing in mind the preparatory process for the post-2020 global biodiversity framework. Guidance from the high-level political forum would also be required on how to leverage environmental policies to create more jobs, addressing youth unemployment and contributing to decent work.

147. Transformative change, in the sense of reconfiguration of basic social systems and structures, including their institutional framework, social practices, cultural norms and values, is necessary. New models of sustainability governance should ensure adequate investments in knowledge and act on early signals from science and society to avoid unnecessary harm and costs.

148. Political guidance is needed in catalysing innovation while scaling up proven solutions to promote sustainable consumption and production patterns and applying precautionary approaches to mitigating potential risks of technological advancements.

B. High-level political forum as a platform for partnerships

149. Many inputs point to the critical role of the high-level political forum in reinforcing dialogue between policymakers and the scientific community, including on climate impacts and vulnerability assessments. The forum could also promote strong dialogue between the statistical and the political communities to ensure that data is relevant and disseminated to meet users' needs and to promote the use of data by policymakers.

150. All countries should be enabled to meet the data demands of the 2030 Agenda. The high-level political forum is therefore expected to call for strengthened investment in national statistical systems, while also acknowledging data produced by civil society and academia. An equity lens requires access to reliable data, disaggregated by relevant factors, and strong analytical capacities to translate data into coherent, targeted strategies.

151. The high-level political forum is encouraged to strengthen its guidance on achieving the Sustainable Development Goals through partnerships within the United Nations system. Partnerships for closing capacity gaps should be long-term and continuous collaborative projects. International cooperation and capacity-building are key to addressing the interlinkages among the Sustainable Development Goals, as well as sharing knowledge on innovative technologies.

152. It is critical that technology and innovative ideas are disseminated in an inclusive way, without widening existing gaps or creating further divides. Cooperation must be strengthened in the areas of increased investments in digital development and skills, through increased support for leveraging information and communications technologies and new technologies.

153. Inputs encourage countries to share their experiences in universal social protection, developing productive capacity and pre-, in- and post-market redistribution in their voluntary national reviews. It is suggested that the effectiveness of the reviews could be reinforced with greater space for the views of all stakeholders in the review processes at all levels. Some contributions highlight that the high-level political forum could explore synergies and recommendations of other international bodies and forums, including the International Migration Review Forum, and the outcomes thereof.

VI. Recommendations

154. The following are the policy recommendations put forward by the functional commissions of the Economic and Social Council and other intergovernmental bodies and forums in their contributions.

155. Addressing world inequality requires overturning development models and processes that disempower people and communities, exclude the most vulnerable and concentrate wealth and power. It requires the redesign of the relationship between the public and private spheres and coordinated policy, coupled with social and technological innovation, to redirect economic, social, environmental and technological trends, including production and consumption patterns, towards greater inclusiveness.

156. Existing inequalities interact with emerging challenges, in particular climate change, and create new vulnerabilities. Those emerging vulnerabilities and vulnerable groups must be identified through disaggregated data collection, context-specific research and constructive social dialogue.

157. Empowerment that benefits all can be achieved by, inter alia, ensuring non-discriminatory legislation and policymaking at all levels of administration, coupled with equal access to justice and to high-quality public services, infusing transparency and accountability in public administration at all levels and by balancing long-term needs and short-term urgencies in public policy.

158. Empowerment without resources and skills will lead to ineffective policy implementation. Therefore, capacity-building should be accorded the highest priority. Strengthening an enabling environment for volunteering, including through investment, can promote social inclusion.

159. In the design of high-quality education policies, they should not only be considered as an instrument for higher productivity and earnings but also for their potential to transform the lives of all, citizens and migrants, throughout the lifecycle and across multiple learning spaces, maintain peace and protect the planet.

160. Inclusion in the productive system is fundamental. Productive systems should be based on the engagement of all stakeholders in the creation, management and sharing of value. Universal social policies, safeguards, accountability mechanisms and effective access to justice must be in place to ensure the empowerment of people and communities to defend their interests.

161. The meaningful participation and active consultation of children should be facilitated in the implementation, monitoring and review of the 2030 Agenda and related follow-up. Implementation efforts should also be gender-sensitive, with a focus on infrastructure, strengthening access to social protection and public services and effective participation in the labour force and political sphere.

162. The rights of persons with disabilities must be mainstreamed in the implementation and monitoring of the 2030 Agenda at all levels, through the development and consistent use of disability-inclusive indicators.

163. It is important to recognize and strengthen the customary rights and laws of indigenous peoples and local communities to access, use, govern and manage lands and natural resources.

164. Effective cross-sectoral collaboration and coordination are required to successfully address the root causes of hunger and poverty, to enhance resilience against shocks and the effects of climate change, to preserve and restore biodiversity and to manage trade-offs between sectors. Strengthening collaboration on interlinkages requires strong political commitment.

165. Efforts to address the root causes of conflict and those that promote the foundations of peace should be strengthened. Emphasis should be placed on the longer-term development of institutions and capacities, even if they are harder to quantify, and a focus on inclusiveness is required.

166. Securing the means of implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals is essential. Fiscal policies should be reviewed to ascertain whether the collection of taxes on basic goods and services has a negative impact on those being left behind and to assess the extent to which tax policies advance or impede the interests of groups with different levels of resources. Revenues from carbon pricing initiatives or from tobacco taxes can be reinvested into disadvantaged communities.

167. Ensuring that macroeconomic and fiscal instruments work towards equitable, sustainable growth, job creation and the reduction of inequalities will require effective action on international cooperation on tax matters, cross-border financial flows, migration and remittances, debt relief and trade. Deficits in policies and regulatory frameworks, including for technology, should be reviewed.

168. Policy coherence should be pursued with regard to industry, education, labour and investment to enable the creation of green jobs and empower the workforce with the skills required for taking on those jobs. Education and training programmes that focus on digital skills should be inclusive and accessible to everyone.

169. A siloed manner of thinking is hampering the holistic implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals and efforts to address the cross-cutting challenge of empowering people and ensuring inclusiveness and equality. Overcoming those silos requires equal and accountable partnership arrangements between stakeholders and, in many cases, cultural change and institutional reform. Communication and awareness-raising on the Sustainable Development Goals must be emphasized.

170. Empowerment for collaboration is key. The transformations that are needed to implement the Sustainable Development Goals by 2030 call for bold decisions that can be carried through only when those who are governed feel included and understood by those who govern.

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