

**THE SECRETARY-GENERAL**  
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**REMARKS TO HIGH-LEVEL SEGMENT  
OF THE UNITED NATIONS ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL  
ON “MULTILATERALISM AFTER COVID-19:  
WHAT KIND OF UN DO WE NEED AT THE 75TH ANNIVERSARY?”  
17 July 2020**

Excellencies,  
Ladies and gentlemen,

As we gather to reflect on the future of multilateralism, the world is experiencing a deepening calamity.

The COVID-19 pandemic has plunged us into an acute health and economic crisis, the severity of which has not been seen in nearly a century.

The socio-economic impacts will likely unfold for years to come.

The crisis risks halting and reversing progress on poverty eradication, food security, gender equality and other Sustainable Development Goals.

The pandemic has exposed and exacerbated vulnerabilities and inequalities within and among countries.

It has reconfirmed that the systems on which we depend -- food, trade, health, climate -- are not only increasingly interdependent, but increasingly fragile.

Indeed, the pandemic has underscored the world's fragilities not just in the face of a health emergency, but in confronting the climate crisis, lawlessness in cyberspace, and the still-very-real risks of nuclear proliferation.

As we strive to respond and recover, we must reexamine many longstanding assumptions and reconsider the approaches that have led us astray.

We must also reimagine the way nations cooperate.

The pandemic has underscored the need for a strengthened and renewed multilateralism:

A multilateralism based on the powerful ideals and objectives enshrined in the Charter and in the agreements defined across the decades since.

A multilateralism built on trust, that is based on international law and is geared towards the overarching goals of peace and security, human rights and sustainable development.

We need a networked multilateralism, in which the United Nations and its agencies, the international financial institutions, regional organizations and others work together more effectively.

And we need an inclusive multilateralism, drawing on the critical contributions of civil society, business, foundations, the research community, local authorities, cities and regional governments.

This, in turn, will help lead to an effective multilateralism with the mechanisms it needs to make global governance work where it is needed.

Excellencies,

As this Organization's mothership for sustainable, inclusive development, the Economic and Social can do much to advance the cooperation we need.

With the High-Level Political Forum, the Council is home to the foremost annual gathering of governments and partners on implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

With the Financing for Development Forum, the Council convenes a range of actors around the most comprehensive and legitimate financing framework we have: the Addis Ababa Action Agenda.

With the Operational Activities segment, the Council serves as both an effective oversight body of the UN development system and a catalyst for a more effective and cohesive development response at the country and regional levels.

With the Humanitarian Affairs segment and other forums, the ECOSOC can ensure a step change in our ability to operate across pillars to respond to complex situations on the ground.

And by providing dedicated spaces for engagement with young people, and ensuring the participation of many other stakeholders, ECOSOC is showing its commitment to being an inclusive UN body.

But Member States can empower the Council to evolve and change with the times.

In my opinion, the Council should connect with a much wider global audience and develop a strengthened relationship with its subsidiary bodies and with the governing boards of UN development system entities, with a clearer division of labour with the General Assembly.

The ECOSOC must secure the active engagement of the decision makers who are critical to financing implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

And it must ensure that its stakeholder engagement mechanisms become more agile, empowering and representative.

The Council and its members can count on my full cooperation and support in fulfilling its crucial role.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

At this pivotal moment, with COVID-19 still spreading, geopolitical tensions rising, and the cry for racial justice, social justice and climate justice ever more urgent, we have a responsibility to respond to the anxieties, fears and hopes of the people we serve.

A revitalized ECOSOC at the heart of a networked, inclusive and effective multilateralism can help us to do so.

This is the moment for the international community to heed the current wake-up call, and move ahead with a collective response in unity and solidarity.

Thank you.