



Investing in sustainable recovery, advancing gender equality and strengthening partnerships – Towards a renewed social contract anchored in human rights

18 January 2022 | 10:00-12:00 CET | Virtual session

Concept Note

Background

In June 2020, the Human Rights Council adopted resolution 43/19¹ on the promotion and protection of human rights and the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The resolution acknowledged that the promotion and protection of human rights and the implementation of the 2030 Agenda are “interrelated and mutually reinforcing”, while noting the contribution of international human rights mechanisms in promoting the implementation of the 2030 Agenda in accordance with States’ human rights obligations and commitments. The resolution called for three half-day intersessional meetings for dialogue and cooperation on human rights and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development to be held in 2021, 2022 and 2023. As per this resolution, a half day meeting was held on 14 January 2021, following two intersessional meetings held in 2019, called for in resolution 37/24.²

The **first** intersessional meeting³ took place on 16 January 2019 under the theme “Empowering people and ensuring inclusiveness and equality”. The meeting examined the relationship between the SDGs and human rights and concluded, among other things, that the SDGs would be best realized through a human rights-based approach to their implementation at the national, regional and global levels.

The **second** intersessional meeting⁴ was held on 3 December 2019 under the theme “Accelerated action and transformative pathways: realizing the decade of action and delivery for sustainable development”. The meeting reiterated that much more action and delivery would be needed, and faster, to accelerate implementation of the SDGs, including in the adoption of human rights-based public policies.

The **third** intersessional meeting⁵ was held on 14 January 2021 and focused on “Building back better: integrating human rights in sustainable and resilient recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic”, highlighting SDG 10 on reduced inequalities, SDG 16 on peace, justice and strong

¹ <https://undocs.org/A/HRC/RES/43/19>

² https://ap.ohchr.org/documents/dpage_e.aspx?si=A/HRC/RES/37/24

³ https://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/HRC/RegularSessions/Session40/Documents/A_HRC_40_34.docx

⁴ https://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/HRC/RegularSessions/Session43/Documents/A_HRC_43_33_AdvanceE_ditedVersion.docx

⁵ https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/HRBodies/HRCouncil/2030Agenda/ThirdSession/A_HRC_46_48.docx



institutions and gender mainstreaming in all 2030 Agenda implementation. The meeting concluded that COVID-19 represents a historic opportunity for States to build a ‘new social contract’, based on human rights and equal opportunities for all. This will require renewed commitment to realizing economic and social rights, shifting away from underinvestment in fundamental public services such as health and social protection and departing from economic policies that exacerbate inequalities within and between States. Furthermore, human rights-based recovery measures are needed to address historic, systemic and institutional discrimination based on gender, race and ethnicity, among others.

The fourth intersessional meeting will build on the previous three intersessional meetings.

The focus of each intersessional meeting is informed by the theme of the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF) organized during the same year. The theme for the HLPF 2022 will be “Building back better from the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) while advancing the full implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development”. Among others, it will review in-depth Sustainable Development Goals 5 on gender equality and 17 on the means of implementation and partnerships for the Goals.

The purpose of the intersessional meetings is to provide a space for States, relevant United Nations and regional human rights mechanisms, United Nations agencies, funds and programmes, national human rights institutions (NHRIs) and civil society organizations (CSOs) to share good practices, achievements, challenges and lessons learned concerning integrated approaches in the promotion and protection of human rights and the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. The summary report of each intersessional meeting is submitted to the HLPF session of the respective year, thereby contributing to the discussions held at the HLPF.⁶

The fourth intersessional meeting takes place during a time of great challenges to human rights and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The Secretary-General underscored the centrality of the international human rights framework and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development to guide States out of the crisis and build back better. In launching “Our Common Agenda”⁷ the Secretary-General called for a ‘renewed social contract anchored in human rights’. This, together with the Secretary-General’s Call to Action for Human Rights,⁸ and commitments made by States at the Generation Equality Forum in July 2021,⁹ as well as the “Sustainable Recovery Pledge: Building a better future for all, with human rights at its heart”,¹⁰ provides pathways to designing country recoveries grounded in States’ human rights obligations, including gender equality.

⁶ <https://undocs.org/A/HRC/RES/43/19>

⁷ https://www.un.org/en/content/common-agenda-report/assets/pdf/Common_Agenda_Report_English.pdf

⁸ https://www.un.org/sg/sites/www.un.org.sg/files/atoms/files/The_Highest_Aspiration_A_Call_To_Action_For_Human_Rights_English.pdf

⁹ <https://forum.generationequality.org/home>

¹⁰ As of 13 July 2021, 49 States and 27 organizations supported the pledge: <https://fngeneve.um.dk/en/copy-of-human-rights/sustainable-recovery-pledge>





Theme

The theme for the fourth intersessional meeting is “Investing in sustainable recovery, advancing gender equality and strengthening partnerships – Towards a renewed social contract anchored in human rights”, with a focus on SDG 5 ‘Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls’, SDG 17 ‘Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development’, and the overarching promise of the 2030 Agenda to leave no one behind and to reach those furthest behind first.

Global context for the fourth intersessional meeting

The COVID-19 pandemic has taken a disproportionate toll on women and girls, significantly eroding progress on SDG 5. This has especially impacted women, who face multiple and persistent forms of discrimination including on the basis of race, ethnicity and social status. People who were already in vulnerable situations have been the most affected by both the health and the socio-economic impacts of the pandemic. In some countries, the pandemic has been used as a pretext for violating human rights and fundamental freedoms, including by shrinking democratic and civil society space.

Rising poverty and inequalities, with women particularly affected by job losses, longstanding gaps in social protection coverage, unequal representation in decision-making processes, growing exclusion from education and an increase in the disproportionate burden of care work, have highlighted the urgency to tackle entrenched and unaddressed gender inequalities in the context of COVID-19 recovery plans. Nevertheless, social protection, labour market and other recovery measures adopted by States to respond to COVID-19 have often been gender-blind.¹¹

Inequitable access to vaccines within and among countries, a two-speed recovery and growing debt distress are limiting the fiscal and policy space for critical investments in recovery, particularly in developing countries. Concerns are mounting about the introduction of austerity measures, which could result in further negative impacts on human rights and gender equality. Building on the vision of SDG 17, it is urgent to strengthen human rights, including in particular gender perspectives, in the implementation of the SDGs. Moreover, large gender gaps remain under Goal 17, notably with regard to a lack of high-quality, timely, reliable and gender disaggregated data, statistics and analysis to inform decision-making.¹²

Focus and objectives of the meeting

Drawing on previous intersessional meetings on human rights and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, this meeting is an opportunity to highlight good practices and

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<https://www.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/Headquarters/Attachments/Sections/Library/Publications/2021/Feminist-plan-for-sustainability-and-social-justice-en.pdf>

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<https://www.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/Headquarters/Attachments/Sections/Library/Publications/2021/Progress-on-the-Sustainable-Development-Goals-The-gender-snapshot-2021-en.pdf>





discuss recommendations for gender-transformative and human rights-based recovery efforts from the COVID-19 pandemic, focusing on SDG 5 and SDG 17. The meeting aims to:

- Review impactful action and initiatives towards human rights-based and gender-transformative investments, partnerships and policy making for inclusive recovery, including in the context of “Our Common Agenda” and the “Call to Action on Human Rights”;
- Review measures and initiatives that are proving effective to protect and enhance partnerships, public participation, civil society space, fiscal transparency and accountability in the context of human rights-based recovery efforts;
- Discuss how to increase the availability of high-quality, timely and reliable disaggregated data including by income, gender, race, ethnicity, as well as data specifically capturing gender discrimination, to monitor progress to underpin human rights-based and gender-transformative policies;
- Highlight States’ good practice to increase the fiscal space for human rights-based SDG implementation strategies that produce systemic change, curb discrimination and gender inequalities, and promote transformative partnerships, and discuss how to strengthen domestic resource mobilization in line with SDG 17 to improve domestic capacity for tax and other revenue collection in support of human rights-based recovery efforts, including through official development assistance and assistance in attaining long-term debt sustainability.

Methodology and format of the meeting

Like the previous intersessional meetings, this meeting will provide an opportunity for participants to share good practices, achievements, challenges and lessons learned concerning the promotion and protection of human rights and the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

The meeting will commence with a high-level opening session followed by a thematic session and a brief closing session. It is envisaged that the high-level session will include opening statements from a Senior Official of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, the President of the Human Rights Council, and the Chair of the intersessional meeting followed by a keynote address.

The thematic session will include a panel discussion with a moderator and 3-4 national and regional experts who will share practical experiences, achievements, lessons learned and new ideas on implementing SDGs 5 and 17 since COVID-19, highlighting measures to mainstream gender and address inequalities. Participants will make contributions from the floor that link to the presentations of the experts and highlight additional practical experiences, good practices and methodologies.

The Chairperson for the intersessional meeting will moderate the opening session and close the meeting by providing an overview of the discussions as well as an initial indication of the main conclusions and recommendations to be taken forward to the HLPF in July 2022.

The meeting will bring together representatives of Member States along with experts from State institutions (such as national parliaments, NHRIs, and national development agencies),





United Nations and regional human rights mechanisms, United Nations agencies and country teams (UNCTs), academia and CSOs. It will be open to Human Rights Council members and observers, including non-governmental organizations in consultative status with the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC).

Given the situation of COVID-19, this fourth intersessional will take the format of a two-hour virtual meeting. The platform and appropriate link to the session will be announced in advance of the meeting and will be placed on the Human Rights Council intersessional meeting website. The meeting will be webcast in the six official UN languages.

Speaking time for participants wishing to take the floor will be two minutes. Given the time constraints, it may not be possible to accommodate all who may wish to make an intervention during the meeting. Participants are therefore invited to submit their written statements to ohchr-sdgs@un.org, no later than 25 January 2022, in order that they may be part of the documents for the meeting and used to inform the summary report.

The meeting will be made accessible to persons with disabilities as per HRC resolution 43/19. Oral statements may be embossed in Braille from any of the six official languages of the United Nations upon request and following the procedure described in the Accessibility guide to the Human Rights Council for persons with disabilities¹³.

Outcome

The intersessional meeting will contribute to generating focus on and attention to the importance and relevance of the practical demonstrable synergies between the SDGs and human rights. The Chair together with the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights will prepare a summary report, which will be made available to 49th regular session of the Human Rights Council in 2022. Pursuant to resolution 43/19, the report will also be made available to the HLPF for its 2022 session. The report will be disseminated widely to give greater visibility to how better promotion and protection of human rights and gender equality will advance the realization of the SDGs.

¹³ <https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/HRBodies/HRCouncil/2018AccessibilityGuide.pdf>

