**Statement at HRC intersessional meeting on human rights and the 2030 Agenda – building a sustainable recovery from COVID-19.** 14th January 2021.

Kate Donald, Center for Economic and Social Rights

We are calling for a recovery which is not only sustainable but also just and transformative. Not for “building back better”, but for building something *new*.

We need a fundamental shift to an economy centred on people and planet, not profit and extraction. It is our conviction that the human rights framework can help guide these efforts, and we’ve been working with partners around the world to [illustrate concretely](https://www.cesr.org/covid-19-recovering-rights-series-0) how this could be done. I’d like to highlight a couple of important points from this work now.

First, one of the biggest risks now is of a return to austerity in the medium-term. Eurodad have shown that at least 80 countries have already made commitments [to the IMF](https://www.cesr.org/sites/default/files/Brief%2012%20-%20IMF%20FINAL%20PDF.pdf) to implement severe austerity (or cost-cutting) measures between 2021 and 2023. This will only lock in more deprivation and even starker inequality, and must be fiercely resisted if we are to have any hope of achieving the SDGs.

Instead, countries must pursue truly redistributive economic policies. We’ve seen that billionaire fortunes grown even bigger during the pandemic, while millions struggle to put food on the table. This is unconscionable. [Excess profits taxes and wealth taxes](https://www.cesr.org/sites/default/files/Brief%203%20Progressive%20Tax_.pdf) are one actionable, rights-aligned way to raise much-needed revenue and tackle inequality. They are already being implemented in several countries, including recently Argentina.

These are just a few of the elements of the transformative shift we need, if we are to learn the lessons of structural adjustment, the financial crisis and the pandemic. Ultimately, we need a [rights-based economy](https://www.cesr.org/rights-based-economy-putting-people-and-planet-first) which addresses structural inequalities at their root, not just papers over the cracks.