



High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development

United Nations Economic and Social Council

Side event

“The SDGs at a turning point: Ensuring progress amid recurrent crises”

12 July 2022 – United Nations, New York

13:00-14:30 (Virtual)

Concept Note

Objective and outcome

The objective of this side event is to discuss the impact of multiple crises on the achievement of the SDGs and policy implications. The Economic Analysis and Policy Division of the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs (EAPD/DESA) will present recent research on this topic, which will be followed by presentations by a panel of experts from Member States, academia, and international organizations on their visions and suggestions to ensure that the promises of the 2030 Agenda are delivered. The audience will also have the opportunity to engage in the discussion after the presentations.

Background

In addition to the overarching challenge of climate change and many local crises (droughts, floods, conflicts, internal displacements) the global community has been recently confronted by two additional crises - the Covid-19 pandemic and the war in Ukraine. These two crises on their

own pose new threats to the achievement of the SDGs, but they have also a cumulative effect as many countries haven't yet recovered from the socio-economic impacts of the pandemic.

Climate change has been accelerating with severe consequences for livelihoods, infrastructure, and nature. Climate change events also disproportionately affect more vulnerable states and populations where the acceleration of the SDGs is most critical.

The pandemic added to this background and in 2020, for the first time in 20 years, global extreme poverty increased. The pandemic also harmed education as an additional 101 million children fell below the minimum reading proficiency threshold. A combination of economic shocks, school closures and interruptions in reproductive health services caused an intensification of violence against women and girls, as well as child marriage.

The war in Ukraine intensified just as economies were beginning a fragile recovery, albeit at uneven rates across the world and, in many cases, marred by unequal access to vaccines, adding new hurdles to the global development agenda. The war in Ukraine is a humanitarian disaster and has also shocked global commodity markets causing higher food and energy prices. The most vulnerable economies are once again more exposed to these risks, which compounded further challenges from limited fiscal space and debt burdens.

EAPD will present recent research explaining how the current series of crises—individually and in combination—are likely to affect the ability to deliver the promises included in the 2030 Agenda. The research analyzes the transmission of these crises through seven channels and discusses policy implications.

Opening remarks:

- **Ms. Maria Francesca Spatolisano**, Assistant Secretary-General for Policy Coordination and Inter-Agency Affairs, UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA)

Panellists:

Chair:

- **Mr. Shantanu Mukherjee**, Director of the Economic Analysis and Policy Division, UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA)

Presenters:

- **Mr. Marcelo T. LaFleur**, Economic Affairs Officer, UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA)
- **Mr. Alfredo González Reyes**, Director of the National Council for Agenda 2030, Mexico
- **Dr. Sakiko Fukuda-Parr**, Professor of International Affairs, The New School
- **FAO expert** (TBC)

The chair will facilitate an open, free-flowing exchange among presenters, followed by an interactive discussion between presenters and the other participants, which will include representatives of Member States, institutional stakeholders, as well as civil society and the private sector. All presenters will be participating in a virtual setting. Each presenter will be invited to give their perspective on the theme (for about 10 minutes each), keeping in mind the focus questions of the discussion.

Questions for discussion

- What are the compounding effects caused by the multiple crises on SDG?
- How can governments accelerate the post-pandemic economic recovery and create the conditions for faster SDG progress, including on climate change mitigation, when inflationary pressures are on the rise and the short-term macroeconomic prospects are deteriorating?
- What are the opportunities to integrate the private sector in the recovery plans and investments that support sustainable development? How can a new type of economy advance implementation of the SDGs?
- Is there room for a new form of capitalism that can bring sustained prosperity, ensure more equity and serve everyone, while caring for the planet?
- What kind of reforms are needed in the global trade system to ensure that vulnerable economies and vulnerable social groups are more resilient to external shocks and not left behind?
- Crises can be an opportunity to implement long-due reforms at national and international level – what kind of reforms could be envisioned and/or implemented in the context of these crises?