



## 2023 ECOSOC High-level Segment

*“Overcoming ‘short-termism’ to secure a better future:  
Long-term trends and scenarios on crisis response and recovery and the SDGs”*

Thursday, 20 July 2023, 3:00 – 5:30 pm  
ECOSOC Chamber, United Nations Headquarters, New York

### Concept Note

#### Background

The fundamental principle of leaving no one behind embedded in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is a shared pursuit by every country. Yet halfway to 2030, that pursuit remains a challenge as the SDGs have been slipping from the world’s grasp as a succession of global crises over the past few years has battered all countries.

At the half-way point to 2030, only about 12 per cent of SDG targets are on track to be reached by 2030. Under current trends, 575 million people will still be living in extreme poverty in 2030. The world is back at hunger levels not seen since 2005. Based on the way things are going, it will take 286 years to close gender gaps in legal protection and remove discriminatory laws. Despite the Paris Agreement, carbon dioxide levels continue to rise, and vast numbers of species worldwide are threatened with extinction.

At the same time, recent responses to the crises have demonstrated that governments and other stakeholders are capable of incredibly determined action when the need arises. Sustainable development scenarios show that the SDGs and climate targets are still within reach and that there are possible pathways towards ensuring decent living standards for all.

Integrating long-term thinking and decision-making into policy making is an essential part of sustainable development, for the current and future well-being of people and planet. Notably, the historic World Commission on Environment and Development’s 1987 Brundtland report “Our Common Future” defines sustainable development as “development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.”

Sustainable strategies today can transform and enhance resilience and SDG progress tomorrow. The recovery and full implementation of the SDGs, as well as the advancement of sustainable development beyond 2030, will require steadfast



long-term thinking, foresight and strategies. Countries also need to adopt long-term strategies that capitalizes on the multiple interlinkages that exist among the SDGs and their targets. A strong focus on reducing income inequality in society, for example, is key to eradicating extreme poverty and hunger, while also contributing to the achievement of multiple other Goals. By embracing long-term economic and social development and environmental protection strategies, nations and the world can still transform to deliver on the vision and promise of the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals.

Short-term thinking, however, has often become institutionalized in government, the private sector and other organizations. Multiple crises can also shorten the time horizons for decisions by policymakers and individuals. Yet, crises also serve to highlight the need for a long-term focus on inclusive and resilient sustainable development. Delaying the implementation of long-term policies would put the 2030 targets out of reach and exacerbate challenges in the future.

The United Nations Secretary-General has recently, in his report [“Our Common Agenda”](#) emphasized the risks of ‘short-termism’ and the importance of taking fully into account long-term policy impacts. This report includes his proposal for a [Summit of the Future](#), which Member States have decided to convene in 2024, to complement and further the outcomes of the 2023 SDG Summit.

ECOSOC will convene a session of its High-level Segment during the afternoon of 20 July 2023, on *“Overcoming ‘short-termism’ to secure a better future: Long-term trends and scenarios on crisis response and recovery and the SDGs.”* This session will present different perspectives and experiences and engage participants in a dialogue on overcoming ‘short-termism’ and focusing on integrating long-term, forward-looking approaches to advance sustainable development and secure a better future for all, including addressing such issues as leaving no one behind, equity and intergenerational solidarity. It will also apply long-term thinking and analysis to the policies and multilateral collaboration needed to accelerate the recovery from COVID-19 and the full implementation of the 2030 Agenda at all levels for the year 2030, as well as for advancing sustainable development well beyond.

The session will be informed by the Secretary-General report on *“Long-term future trends and scenarios – impacts on the realization of the Sustainable Development Goals”* (E/2023/89). This report is aimed at looking beyond current crises and emergencies to reflect on longer-term trends and scenarios towards achieving the SDGs and climate change objectives while leaving no one behind. The session will



be convened under the overarching 2023 theme of ECOSOC and the high-level political forum *"Accelerating the recovery from the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) and the full implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development at all levels."*

### *Objective*

The objective of this session of the ECOSOC High-level segment is to bring together ministers from different portfolios, as well as experts and key development actors, to discuss and shape ideas, as well as advance recommendations and policies to inform longer-term sustainable development objectives.

### *Guiding questions*

- In the light of several current and interlinked crises, how can policymakers balance the need for immediate action with a longer-term perspective on the sustainability of policy measures and their long-term impacts on society, the economy and the environment? How can multilateral responses be strengthened to overcome short-term planning and uncoordinated national responses to global crises?
- What are some examples of impactful policies and initiatives that have taken a long-term perspective in economic, social and/or environmental challenges? What lessons can be extracted from them and scaled up?
- How can we better integrate knowledge and expertise into policymaking processes, to ensure that decisions are based on sound evidence and a comprehensive view of the long-term implications of policy options?
- What can we learn from recent developments in terms of feasible science and technology futures? What are the most desirable futures? How might science and technology differ in 2030 and 2050, compared to today? Do long-term scenarios take such future differences into account?

### *Participants*

The ECOSOC High-level Segment will bring together experts from Governments, the UN system, think tanks, regional organizations and other stakeholders. The session will engage ministers, distinguished experts and key actors to present their views and policy recommendations. The involvement of panelists from government, academia, civil society and other stakeholders will provide an opportunity to draw from different perspectives and experiences on overcoming ‘short-termism’ and



focusing on integrating long-term, forward-looking approaches to advance sustainable development to 2030 and beyond.

Participants will be encouraged to provide examples of country experiences and policies and to engage in a discussion with each other and with the audience. The discussions will be led by an expert moderator. The audience will be comprised of Member States and representatives of the United Nations system and of civil society. Space will be provided for interventions by Member States and other stakeholders.

### *Outcome*

The outcome of the session will be a summary by the President of ECOSOC. The High-level segment will also enhance knowledge-sharing and recommendations on policymaking for the long-term, as well as regional and international cooperation.

### *Supporting documentation*

- Report of the Secretary-General report on *“Long-term future trends and scenarios – impacts on the realization of the Sustainable Development Goals”* (E/2023/89).
- Report of the Secretary-General on the [theme of the 2023 ECOSOC and HLPF](#) (E/2023/78)
- Report of the Secretary-General (special edition) *“Progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals: Towards a Rescue Plan for People and Planet”*.

### **Programme**

The programme for the session of the 2023 ECOSOC High-level Segment on *“Overcoming ‘short-termism’ to secure a better future”*, to be convened in the afternoon of 20 July, is available [here](#).

The overall 2023 programme for the High-level Political Forum and the ECOSOC High-level Segment, including on 20 July, can be accessed [here](#).