

Response to the zero draft of the resolution for the ECOSOC and HLPF reviews
Scientific and Technological Community Major Group

22 February 2021

In response to the [zero draft of the resolution](#) for the ECOSOC and HLPF reviews made available on 12 February 2021, the Scientific and Technological Community Major Group (STC MG), co-led by the International Science Council (ISC) and the World Federation of Engineering Organizations (WFEO) and representing more than 40 international scientific Unions and Associations, 140 national and regional scientific organizations and 100 national engineering institutions, is pleased to submit the following proposals aimed at commending a number of critical elements contained within the text of the zero draft and recommending some further modifications to be considered by the two co-facilitators.

The Scientific and Technological Community Major Group would like to make the following recommendations which could have the potential to strengthen the role of the ECOSOC and the HLPF in achieving the aspirations of the 2030 Agenda:

- The resolution should clearly address **the role of the multi-stakeholder forum on science, technology and innovation (STI Forum) held every year under the auspices of ECOSOC and a key part of the Technology Facilitation Mechanism mandated by the 2030 Agenda and the Addis Ababa Action Agenda, which needs to be better connected to the two agendas and the HLPF and FFD Forum.** The Forum, referred to in *Annex 1, para. 9*, should become a key stage in the preparatory process for the HLPF. **Member States could be encouraged to work with the STI for SDGs Roadmaps and use the STI Forum as a platform for collective learning through exchange of experiences and best practices in orienting STI capabilities towards achieving the SDGs to ensure that scientific and technological innovation is effectively supporting SDG implementation.** STI Roadmaps could also focus on their contribution to a sustainable recovery and future resilience in the context of COVID-19. The STI Forum could also serve to better understand the knowledge and capacity gaps of Member States and other stakeholders in terms of STI to support ambitious SDG implementation. In that context, the **Forum could bundle science and technology issues across the UN system and based on this identify and raise policy questions for the ECOSOC to deliberate upon, as often indicated by the current President of ECOSOC.**
- **In relation to the ECOSOC processes and work of its subsidiary bodies (*Annex 1, para. 37 to 39*), the resolution should seek to further clarify the role of the Commission on Science and Technology for Development (CSTD) which should further contribute to enabling an effective science-policy interface within the context of Agenda 2030.** This would facilitate more productive dialogue across scientific and policy-making communities and promote easy access to a wide range of scientific syntheses. CSTD has also a central role in transferring knowledge, skills and solutions in the science and technology fields and should assist countries in special situations to realize sustainable development. This is complementary to *Para. 16 of Annex 1* of the zero-draft resolution.

- **Concerning the engagement of civil society in various ECOSOC processes (*Annex 1, para. 40 to 42*) we would like to propose the inclusion of a new paragraph addressing the role of scientific communities in supporting the implementation of the Agenda 2030 by providing transformative knowledge and solutions that can accelerate action and progress, and in shaping a sustainable, resilient and just COVID-19 recovery. This would contribute to building trust in science and strengthening the use of scientific evidence as called for by the UN Secretary General in the context of the response to the COVID-19 pandemic.**

We would therefore suggest including the following paragraph: *“The Economic and Social Council should seek to promote the engagement of scientific and engineering expert communities and to foster the role of science which provides a robust basis for identifying and collectively framing issues that require coordinated multilateral action.”*

- **Paragraphs 4 to 15 of Annex 2 referring to the thematic reviews of the HLPF should include a reference to the role of scientists and experts (including from the GSDR Independent Group of Scientists). They should be given a more prominent and well-resourced function in the preparatory processes in distilling, synthesising and scaling up available knowledge that is critical for the SDG implementation such as on how complex human-environment system dynamics can produce trade-offs that hinder individual targets, on the one hand, or produce synergies leading to accelerated action and implementation, on the other. Similarly, scientific knowledge and science-based analysis provide a solid basis for managing interdependencies between sectors and scales from local to global (*Annex 2, para. 15*), identifying systemic gaps, overcoming the challenges and barriers to the implementation of the Agenda 2030 as an indivisible agenda (*Annex 2, para. 12*), and achieving progress across the economic, social and environmental dimensions of sustainable development worldwide. Scientific communities also play a key role in bringing attention to new and emerging issues that threaten the implementation of the SDGs (*Annex 2, para. 34*). The Science and Technological Major Group has submitted in its [first written input](#) a series of proposals for structuring the thematic and SDGs based on the GSDR’s logic of identifying “entry points” and “levers” for transformation. This would ensure coordinated efforts and coherence across sectors and scales, leading to maximised impact and desired outcomes in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda.**
- **Para. 22 of Annex 2 should underscore the importance of involving scientific and engineering communities, academia and universities at national level in preparing the VNRs as they are key in designing and supporting a solid process drawing on robust data and scientific evidence. Improving the HLPF towards better knowledge integration, policy coherence and ambition around the SDGs cannot be achieved without a robust process at national level to support SDGs implementation, and monitoring and review.**
- **As a complementary measure to the set of actions presented in *Annex 2, para. 29*, referring to the follow-up of VNRs, ECOSOC or the HLPF could mandate an official report on good practices identified in the VNRs or SDG reviews or a comprehensive policy document with actionable recommendations.** The UN could, for example, task an expert panel to review all the VNRs in a cycle for best practices, systemic problems that need more multilateral attention, and also emerging issues. Their assessment and recommendations could then inform the preparations of the next HLPF and, every four years, the negotiations on the Political Declaration.

- **Paragraphs 34 and 35 of Annex 2 referring to new and emerging issues could point to the role and value of strategic foresight for the work of ECOSOC and the HLPF, as an essential tool in the decade of action for developing future-ready SDG strategies.** ECOSOC and the HLPF are recognized to be central for identifying new and emerging challenges and promoting reflection, debate and innovative thinking on sustainable development. Other UN entities, like UNDP, UNCTAD, UNESCO, OSAPG, DESA/DPIDG/CEPA, developed their own tools for foresight, integrated assessments and strategic planning. It would be efficient to install a lightweight crowdsourcing approach that uses an online tool to collect foresight insights, methods and products throughout the UN system. The information provided by Member States in their VNR reports on their strategic visions and objectives and the means to achieve them is another good source. A synthesis of the findings could inform ECOSOC and HLPF. This could also support the deliberations of the Independent Group of Scientists (IGS) when drafting the Global Sustainable Development Report (GSDR). In the medium term, the UN could install a standing panel that would assess also other foresight products, for example insights from the scientific community or risk reports by third parties. Moreover, the panel could serve as a resource group which would enable a dialogue on these issues and effective knowledge brokerage.

The Scientific and Technological Community Major Group wishes to commend the following proposals contained within the draft resolution referring to:

- **Enhancing ECOSOC's role in providing integrated policy guidance on the follow-up and operationalization of the findings and outcomes of the HLPF,** particularly its thematic reviews and Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs), based on an integrated report by the Secretary-General collecting lessons learned from the thematic reviews and VNRs and proposing recommendations for follow-up by countries, various segments and forums of the Council, the UN system and other actors.
- **Promoting linkages in the Council's segments and forums' work and encouraging focus, coherence and efficiency** by holding earlier in the year a high-level opening segment and the new coordination segment replacing the ECOSOC's integration segment, with the aim to further elaborate on the trends and policy issues arising from the previous GA session, HLPF cycle and from work of the UN system and of the scientific and stakeholder communities, and to foster effective feedback into the HLPF and ECOSOC work for the year.
- **Strengthening the linkages between the specialized agencies and ECOSOC and promoting a coherent and coordinated approach in supporting the implementation of the 2030 Agenda.**
- **Improving the outcomes of ECOSOC and its subsidiary bodies** to make them more relevant, coherent and solution-oriented to address challenges to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and **conducting a review of the work and agendas of its subsidiary bodies** to determine how they can most effectively support the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and produce technical and expert analysis, assessments and policy recommendations.
- **Strengthening the focus of the HLPF on interlinkages across the SDGs,** including policy implications of their synergies and trade-offs, **and on cross-cutting issues** such as governance, social protection, climate change and environmental issues, **while underlining those measures that can have the greatest and most transformative impact** across multiple

goals and targets as recommended in the Global Sustainable Development Report (GSDR) 2019.

- **Improving the thematic reviews and the HLPF programme and proceedings to reflect the integrated, indivisible and interlinked nature of the SDGs, and strengthening the HLPF preparatory processes** by drawing on the wealth of data and knowledge produced every year on the SDGs by the UN system, the scientific and stakeholder communities, and other fora to the HLPF.
- **Making VNR sessions more interactive providing a space for discussions and peer-learning, as well making use of VNR labs during the HLPF to continue the interaction on the VNRs presented or discuss specific themes from the VNRs with other countries. Focusing VNRs not only on successes but also on lessons learned and good practices that have transformative potential and on challenges and knowledge, implementation and capacity gaps where support is needed.**
- **Giving the Global Sustainable Development Report (GSDR) a more prominent role in the preparation of the meetings of the HLPF, especially of the HLPF under the auspices of the General Assembly (SDG Summit), and strengthening the engagement of the Independent Group of Scientists (IGS) preparing the 2023 GSDR in the 2022 and 2023 HLPF.**

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