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Commission on the Status of Women

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Item 5 of the provisional agenda*

Follow-up to Economic and Social Council resolutions and decisions

Letter dated 19 December 2014 from the President of the Economic and Social Council to the Chair of the Commission on the Status of Women

I have the honour to request your functional commission's substantive contributions to the themes for the 2015 session of the Economic and Social Council and the 2015 integration segment, as well as to inform you of the theme for the 2016 session of the Council. I also have the honour to inform you of the 2014 session of the Council and its adopted mandates that are of relevance to the functional commissions.

In September 2015, the General Assembly is expected to adopt a unified and universal post-2015 development agenda that responds to the many changes that have taken place in the global development environment since the Millennium Summit in 2000. The transition to an ambitious, integrated, coherent and universal post-2015 development framework based on the sustainable development goals requires a clear, integrated vision at the conceptual level of policies and at the stage of implementation across sectors, actors and levels.

The Economic and Social Council will have a central role in advancing an integrated approach to a unified and universal agenda. In its resolution 68/1 on the strengthening of the Economic and Social Council, the General Assembly decided that the themes for the 2015 and 2016 cycles of the Council, which mark the transition from a Millennium Development Goals-based to a sustainable development goals-based development agenda, should be decided together to give ample time to the Economic and Social Council system and Member States to make the necessary adjustments to their agendas in support of the new development framework. The 2015 and 2016 cycles of the Council will be critical to effectively align the work of the entire Economic and Social Council system with the new institutional structure defined by the Assembly and enable the Council to provide

* E/CN.6/2015/1.



substantive leadership to guide the transition from the Millennium Development Goals to the sustainable development goals.

The Economic and Social Council will support the transition to the new development framework through its 2015 theme “Managing the transition from the Millennium Development Goals to the sustainable development goals: what it will take”. The Economic and Social Council system will consider the 2015 theme throughout its work during the 2015 session, which will culminate in the high-level segment of the Council in July 2015.

The high-level political forum, meeting under the auspices of the Economic and Social Council, will address aspects of this transition through its aligned theme “Strengthening integration, implementation and review — the high-level political forum after 2015”. The Council will also address analytical and substantive aspects of the 2015 theme and the transition to the post-2015 development agenda through all of its segments and forums, including the Development Cooperation Forum and the Financing for Development follow-up process.

The Economic and Social Council also adopted, at its organizational session in July 2014, the theme of the 2016 session of the Council, entitled “Implementing the post-2015 development agenda: moving from commitments to results”.

I wish to request your functional commission to consider the 2015 theme of the Economic and Social Council as an agenda item of its session and to provide substantive contributions, as appropriate, to the Council for its consideration during the high-level segment of the Council, which will be convened from 6 to 10 July 2015. Contributions are welcome as early as possible after your functional commission’s session, and not later than 29 May 2015. Kindly refer to annex I to the present letter for further guidance.

I also wish to invite you to bring to the attention of your functional commission the 2016 theme of the Economic and Social Council and urge your commission to provide, as appropriate and in due course, substantive contributions on this theme to the 2016 high-level segment of the Council.

In its resolution 68/1, the General Assembly established the integration segment of the Economic and Social Council to consolidate all the inputs of Member States, the subsidiary bodies of the Council, the United Nations system and other relevant stakeholders and to promote the balanced integration of the three dimensions of sustainable development.

The Economic and Social Council decided that the theme for the integration segment of the 2015 session of the Council is “Achieving sustainable development through employment creation and decent work for all”. The integration segment will bring together Member States, the Economic and Social Council system, the International Labour Organization constituents, civil society and the private sector to focus on how the creation of good quality jobs could be a tool for promoting the economic, social and environmental dimensions of sustainable development. The concept note contained in annex II provides further details on the focus of the integration segment.

I wish to request your functional commission and all other subsidiary bodies, to the extent possible, to kindly provide inputs, by 27 February 2015, on achieving sustainable development through employment creation and decent work for all, with

recommendations and technical guidance on how the Economic and Social Council can integrate these inputs into the larger picture of sustainable development. Please refer again to annex I to the present letter for further guidance.

Regarding the 2014 session of the Economic and Social Council and its adopted mandates that are of relevance to the functional commissions and subsidiary bodies, it would also be greatly appreciated if annex III to the present letter, on the 2014 session of the Council and its adopted mandates, could be brought to the attention of your functional commission for consideration and action, as necessary.

I wish to thank you for your continued collaboration and look forward to your commission's contributions to the 2015 session of the Economic and Social Council.

(Signed) Martin **Sajdik**

Annex I

Interaction of subsidiary bodies with the Economic and Social Council in 2015

In accordance with General Assembly resolution 68/1 on the strengthening of the Economic and Social Council, the Council is mandated to provide substantive leadership to the system through adoption of an annual theme and to stagger the segments of the Council throughout the year, with a work programme cycle beginning in July. The present annex provides information on some of the important provisions of this resolution that create opportunities for the subsidiary bodies to advance their own work in the context of wider process of strengthening the Council in 2015.

Segment title	Functions, themes and expected outcomes of the segment	Expected input by the subsidiary bodies	Opportunities for subsidiary bodies
High-level segment (6-10 July 2015)	<p><i>Function:</i> the high-level segment includes the annual ministerial review through 2015. The three ministerial days of the high-level political Forum are also held in the framework of the high-level segment.</p> <p><i>Theme of the annual ministerial review:</i> “Managing the transition from the Millennium Development Goals to the Sustainable Development Goals: what it will take”</p> <p><i>Theme of the high-level political forum:</i> “Strengthening integration, implementation and review — the high-level political forum after 2015”</p> <p><i>Outcome:</i> ministerial declaration</p>	<p>Subsidiary bodies of the Council are requested to address aspects of the Council’s theme as one of the agenda items of their session, as appropriate, in their area of specialization and provide inputs to the Council accordingly.</p> <p>Contributions could take the form of a negotiated outcome, Chair’s summary or contribution by the Secretariat (if time does not allow for consideration by the Commission).</p> <p>Contributions are welcome as early as possible after your functional commission’s session, and not later than 29 May 2015.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review working methods and, if needed, consider adding an agenda item to facilitate this input • Review agendas to identify opportunities for addressing the theme • Consider addressing the issue through intersessional meetings, if necessary
Integration segment (30 March-1 April 2015)	<p><i>Function:</i> to consolidate all the inputs of Member States, the Economic and Social Council system, the United Nations system and other relevant stakeholders in order to fulfil the Rio+20 mandate to the Council to promote the balanced integration of the three dimensions of sustainable development.</p>	<p>Addressing employment creation and decent work would entail the consideration of its implications on the economic (i.e., growth, revenue generation, skills and innovation), social (i.e., social cohesion, reduction of inequalities, poverty alleviation, quality of the workplace) and</p>	<p>In order to provide such inputs, subsidiary bodies can:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review working methods and, if needed, consider adding an agenda item to facilitate this input

<i>Segment title</i>	<i>Functions, themes and expected outcomes of the segment</i>	<i>Expected input by the subsidiary bodies</i>	<i>Opportunities for subsidiary bodies</i>
	<p><i>Theme:</i> “Achieving sustainable development through employment creation and decent work for all”</p> <p><i>Outcome:</i> a summary by the President of the Economic and Social Council, which will serve as an input to the high-level segment, including the high-level political forum</p>	<p>environmental (i.e., opportunities for green jobs, sustainability of consumption and production patterns) dimensions.</p> <p>The functional commissions and other subsidiary bodies are requested to provide inputs from their own perspective and, to the extent possible, provide recommendations and technical guidance on how the Economic and Social Council can integrate their inputs into the larger picture of sustainable development. The regional commissions are requested to bring regional perspectives on integration to the Council.</p> <p>Contributions could take the form of a negotiated outcome, Chair’s summary or contribution by the Secretariat (if time does not allow for consideration by the Commission).</p> <p>Contributions are expected no later than 27 February 2015.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review agendas to identify opportunities for addressing the theme, particularly from the economic, social and environmental perspectives • Consider addressing the issue through intersessional meetings, if necessary • Consider how the theme is addressed from the perspective of cross-cutting issues, such as gender, inequalities, etc.
<p>Coordination and management meetings</p> <p><i>Below is a proposed allocation of items to the 2015 coordination and management meetings</i></p>	<p><i>Functions:</i> at the coordination and management meetings, the Council reviews and adopts the reports of its subsidiary bodies, addresses system-wide coordination on specific development issues (e.g., gender mainstreaming or non-communicable diseases), and considers special country situation or regional issues on its agenda.</p> <p><i>Outcome:</i> resolutions and decisions</p>	<p>In accordance with para. 17 of the annex to General Assembly resolution 68/1, the subsidiary bodies should include in their reports an executive summary, and the reports should be concise, clearly identifying the conclusions and recommendations and issues that may require attention and/or action by the Council.</p>	<p>Subsidiary bodies should take into account the coordination and management meeting during which their report will be considered by the Council for action, and plan for reporting accordingly.</p>

<i>Segment title</i>	<i>Functions, themes and expected outcomes of the segment</i>	<i>Expected input by the subsidiary bodies</i>	<i>Opportunities for subsidiary bodies</i>
8-10 April 2015	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Elections to subsidiary bodies – Reports of subsidiary bodies (NGO Committee, Transport of Dangerous Goods) – Report of the Executive Board of the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) – Reports of the United Nations Training and Research Institute 		
8-10 June 2015	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Gender and women issues (report of the Commission on the Status of Women + gender mainstreaming) – Financing for Development – Reports of subsidiary and expert bodies (Statistics, Social Development, Tax Matters, Committee for Development Policy) – Report of the United Nations Inter-Agency Task Force on the Prevention and Control of Non-communicable Diseases 		
20-22 July 2015	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Review of the Istanbul Programme of Action (6b) and matters related to the least developed countries (13(a)) – Regional cooperation – Palestine and colonial peoples and countries – Reports of subsidiary bodies (NGO Committee, Committee on Science and Technology for Development, Committee for Development Policy, 		

<i>Segment title</i>	<i>Functions, themes and expected outcomes of the segment</i>	<i>Expected input by the subsidiary bodies</i>	<i>Opportunities for subsidiary bodies</i>
	<p>Public Administration, United Nations Forum on Forests, Commission on Narcotic Drugs, Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice, International Narcotics Control Board, United Nations Forum on Indigenous Issues, United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Human rights and refugees — coordination questions (Committee for Programme and Coordination) – Integrated follow-up to conferences (Report of the Chair of the Committee on World Food Security) – Report of the United Nations Chief Executives Board for Coordination – Country-specific issues (Haiti, South Sudan) – Report of the Governing Council of the United Nations Commission for Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat) 		

Annex II

2015 integration segment

30 March-1 April 2015

Achieving sustainable development through employment creation and decent work for all

Concept note

The Economic and Social Council decided that the theme for the integration segment of the 2015 session of the Council would be “achieving sustainable development through employment creation and decent work for all”.

At almost the same time, the Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals concluded its work and declared that “people are at the centre of sustainable development”. A focus on how the creation of good quality jobs could be a tool for promoting the economic, social and environmental aspects of sustainable development will provide an opportunity for Member States, civil society, the private sector, academics and other key actors to discuss and elaborate upon the many ways in which people are at the centre of sustainable development. At the same time, the meeting will serve as a platform to identify policy choices and possible trade-offs that could arise from an integrated approach. Tackling these issues together in an integrated manner makes sense. Currently, the international community faces massive environmental, social, economic and employment challenges.

Escalating natural resource use and pollution is compounding the existing scarcity of fresh water and fertile land and accelerating the loss of biodiversity and climate change beyond tolerable, perhaps even manageable, levels. Not only is the situation environmentally unsustainable, it has substantial economic and social costs.

While progress has been made in reducing absolute poverty, there are still 839 million workers in developing countries (or 27 per cent of global employment) who are unable to earn enough to lift themselves and their families above the \$2-a-day poverty threshold. Moreover, the pace of reducing extreme poverty has slowed in recent years and environmental degradation has the potential to reverse the hard won gains in development and poverty reduction.

Thanks in part to rising commodity prices, significant parts of the developing world and many emerging economies recorded robust economic growth during the last decade. But in most cases the benefits of this growth were not fairly distributed. The gap between the incomes of the rich and the poor is becoming a gulf in the vast majority of countries around the world, exacerbating social tensions in all societies.

Social cohesion is threatened by ongoing discrimination against women, ethnic groups, indigenous people and various other minority groups. Economic and environmental problems encourage labour mobility and in some parts of the world migrant workers face exploitation. All people deserve equal treatment and equal opportunity in the world of work.

Today’s challenges must be tackled in an integrated and cohesive manner. For example, a labour market recovery that generates sufficient decent work will definitely require substantially stronger economic growth than the world has

recorded in recent years. But this faster growth needs to be more balanced if sustainable development is to be achieved. This means that the benefits of growth must be distributed more fairly between countries and within countries to reverse widening income inequality and promote social cohesion.

Simultaneously, the composition of growth needs to be altered, and in particular consumption and investment patterns must become more balanced and environmentally sustainable. The latter can be facilitated by a stronger focus on the creation of decent green jobs. Major investments in infrastructure that will make societies more resilient and energy efficient plus the development of new renewable energy sources can contribute substantially to job creation and offset any job losses in industries that need to reduce their carbon footprint. Failure to act urgently will result in further job loss in sectors most threatened by climate change such as agriculture, forestry and fisheries, which employ well over a billion people.

Sustainable development requires the upgrading of parts of the informal and rural economies. These sectors provide the vast bulk of jobs in the developing world and they can be made more productive and better paid without adverse consequences for the environment. This will require a combination of efficient public investment and encouragement of private initiative through access to affordable credit and a conducive business environment. For developing countries, industry and trade policies that support economic diversification and higher value-added production in an environmentally sustainable manner are also essential.

To achieve the social dimension of sustainable development will require implementation of promises that have been made about a social floor in many international forums in recent years and progress towards a living wage. It will also require the establishment and support of labour market institutions that help to promote fairness at the workplace.

All three aspects of sustainable development can be facilitated by the right education, training and skills policies plus increased investment in other active labour market policies. Economic growth in some economies is hindered by inadequate investment in basic education and skill shortages. Social cohesion will be promoted if workers have the opportunity throughout their working life to improve their skills and the quality of their jobs. The promotion of environmental sustainability will require the development of new skills and the expansion of many occupations that have been neglected in the past.

Focus

Based on the above, the integrated segment in 2015 will focus on the following priority areas:

- (a) National and international economic policies to facilitate sustainable development and decent work;
- (b) Transforming the informal economy and upgrading rural economies to enhance productivity and promote better jobs in an environmentally sustainable manner;
- (c) Reducing poverty and addressing rising income inequality with a neutral environmental impact;

(d) Expanding green jobs, building resilient societies and promoting more sustainable patterns of consumption and investment;

(e) The social floor, living wages, labour market institutions and sustainable development;

(f) Training, skills and active labour market policies for sustainable development.

Key questions

- What are the potential short-term policy choices and longer-term gains inherent in an integrated approach to promoting full employment and decent work for all?
- How can policy coherence in economic, social and environmental dimensions be achieved in the promotion of full employment and decent work for all?
- How can labour policies help to reduce economic and social inequalities?
- Why is youth unemployment a major issue in many countries regardless of their level of development?
- Can agricultural sector development help to generate youth employment in African countries?
- What measures are needed to link entrepreneurs to global supply chains?
- What role do Governments, the United Nations system, the tripartite constituents of the International Labour Organization (ILO) and civil society play in ensuring rights at work?
- What is the future of work? How are countries preparing their education systems to respond to this change? What are the investments required?
- What kinds of jobs are needed to provide solutions to climate change? What are the policies required and how can the trade-offs between the environmental, economic and social pillars be mitigated?
- What kinds of investments are needed to generate the greatest job potential while maintaining environmental sustainability?
- What kind of institutional framework and governance arrangements are needed for the successful integration of the economic, social and environmental dimensions of sustainable development to facilitate decent work?
- What specific steps are needed for the Economic and Social Council system to help countries to boost economic growth in a sustainable way that creates decent jobs?

Format and participants

The meeting will be a three-day event, chaired by the Vice-President of the Economic and Social Council, Ambassador Vladimir Drobnjak. It will feature an opening session with eminent personalities and a number of round-table sessions, TED-style presentations and a general debate. Each round-table session will be moderated and followed by open floor discussion. Participants will be asked to focus on ways to promote policy convergence based on country experiences, good

practices and lessons learned. A background note with key questions will be prepared by ILO to guide the deliberations overall. The Department of Economic and Social Affairs, in collaboration with ILO, will prepare guidance notes for speakers for each individual session. The moderator will summarize the major points of discussion and recommendations arising from each session.

Participants will include the tripartite constituency of ILO (member States, employers and trade unions) alongside representatives of major groups, United Nations system organizations, academia, parliamentarians, local governments, foundations and non-governmental organizations. Eminent speakers will include Heads of State or Government with best practices to share in achieving sustainable development through employment creation and decent work.

Outcome

The outcome of the event will be a summary by the Vice-President of the Economic and Social Council, highlighting the main policy recommendations and providing guidance on integrating the three dimensions of sustainable development. The summary will be available for consideration at the upcoming high-level political forum and the annual ministerial review.

Annex III

2014 session of the Economic and Social Council and relevant adopted mandates

With the adoption of General Assembly resolution 68/1 on the further strengthening of the Economic and Social Council and its system, the Council embarked in 2014 on its new segment structure. Its first high-level segment was held in New York from 7 to 11 July 2014 and included its annual ministerial review, the Development Cooperation Forum and the first ministerial-level meeting of the high-level political forum, under the auspices of the Council.

A ministerial declaration of the high-level segment and the high-level political forum under the auspices of the Council was adopted on 9 July 2014. The declaration addressed the following themes: the need to accelerate achievement of the Millennium Development Goals; the importance of addressing the unfinished agenda in the transition to the sustainable development goals and an ambitious post-2015 development agenda; the need for a strong global partnerships for development; the link between poverty and sustainable development, emphasizing that poverty eradication remains the greatest global challenge and is indispensable to sustainable development; and an acknowledgement of the work of the Economic and Social Council and the high-level political forum, including their role in supporting a future post-2015 development agenda.

The 10 national voluntary presentations under the annual ministerial review offered valuable country experiences in development and shared ideas on ways to link the Millennium Development Goals framework with the sustainable development goals and the post-2015 development agenda. They also shared their countries' experiences in adopting policies that addressed integration challenges of the three dimensions of sustainable development. The ministerial declaration underscored the importance of building on the national voluntary presentations for review and monitoring progress of the post-2015 development agenda.

The high-level political forum under the auspices of the Economic and Social Council was held for the first time in New York from 30 June to 9 July 2014. The ministerial meeting of the forum was held from 7 to 9 July as part of the high-level segment of the Council. The 2014 theme of the high-level political forum was "Achieving the Millennium Development Goals and charting the way for an ambitious post-2015 development agenda, including the sustainable development goals". The high-level political forum benefitted from broad participation, with over 150 panellists and speakers representing the economic, social and environmental dimensions. This included many Ministers, representatives of the United Nations system and other international and regional organizations, major groups, academia, parliamentarians and mayors. In addition to the ministerial declaration, the high-level political forum resulted in policy messages for the elaboration of the post-2015 development agenda and the sustainable development goals.

The 2014 Development Cooperation Forum took the discussions on the post-2015 development agenda to a new level. There was an urgent call to revise and update concepts, systems and ways of working together with the new realities of development cooperation in order to grasp its full potential to advance this transformative development agenda. The Development Cooperation Forum gave

shape to a new narrative of development cooperation driven by all actors and enabling them, especially women and girls, youth and older persons, and migrants, to become part of customized development solutions on the ground. It also advanced discussions on a renewed global partnership for development to mobilize financing and other means of implementation.

Overall, the new high-level segment of the Economic and Social Council and the high-level political forum generated significant interest among Member States and other key stakeholders. The Council is now actively engaged in the follow up to the high-level segment, especially those aspects that are directly related to the acceleration of the Millennium Development Goals and the shaping of the post-2015 development agenda.

With respect to the mandates adopted, in addition to the ministerial declaration, a total of 30 resolutions and 252 decisions were acted on in July 2014. The table below has been prepared reflecting those that have relevance to the functional commissions of the Economic and Social Council. It would be greatly appreciated if the table could be brought to the attention of your functional commission for consideration and action, as necessary.

Owing to the new segment structure, a handful of resolutions were also considered and acted upon at the recent Coordination and Management Meeting of the Economic and Social Council. An addendum will be transmitted in early 2015 for those that have relevance to the work of the functional commissions.

Resolutions/decisions adopted by the Economic and Social Council in 2014 containing requests for follow-up by the Commission on the Status of Women

2014/1 Situation of and assistance to Palestinian women

Resolutions calling for action by the functional commissions

2014/29 Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2011-2020

Resolutions calling for action by all relevant United Nations bodies/entities of the United Nations system

E/HLS/2014/1	Addressing ongoing and emerging challenges for meeting the Millennium Development Goals in 2015 and for sustaining development gains in the future
	Achieving the Millennium Development Goals and charting the way for an ambitious post-2015 development agenda, including the sustainable development goals
2014/2	Mainstreaming a gender perspective into all policies and programmes in the United Nations system
2014/5	Promoting empowerment of people in achieving poverty eradication, social integration and full employment and decent work for all

2014/6	Promoting the rights of persons with disabilities and mainstreaming disability in the post-2015 development agenda
2014/7	Further implementation of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing, 2002
2014/8	Observance of the twentieth anniversary of the International Year of the Family and beyond
2014/10	United Nations Inter-Agency Task Force on the Prevention and Control of Non-communicable Diseases
2014/13	Strengthening of the coordination of emergency humanitarian assistance of the United Nations
2014/14	Progress in the implementation of General Assembly resolution 67/226 on the quadrennial comprehensive policy review of operational activities for development of the United Nations system
2014/24	Special session of the General Assembly on the world drug problem to be held in 2016
2014/25	Support to Non-Self-Governing Territories by the specialized agencies and international institutions associated with the United Nations
2014/27	Assessment of the progress made in the implementation of and follow-up to the outcomes of the World Summit on the Information Society
2014/29	Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2011-2020
