



# General Assembly

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## Human Rights Council

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Agenda item 2

**Annual report of the United Nations High Commissioner  
for Human Rights and reports of the Office of the  
High Commissioner and the Secretary-General**

## **Written statement\* submitted by International Action for Peace & Sustainable Development, a non-governmental organization in special consultative status**

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[01 June 2020]

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\* Issued as received, in the language(s) of submission only.

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## COVID-19 and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

Our world today is dealing with a crisis of huge scale. The vicious, novel coronavirus is inflicting chaos in discriminatingly across the globe. The loss of lives due to this unfathomable pandemic is distressful, however, its negative effects on the economic conditions are prevailing across the globe and the achievement of the sustainable development is beyond imagination. According to the International Monetary Fund cited in the United Nations (UN) reports our world is facing a massive recession, and preliminary estimates have placed the losses at a whopping US\$2 trillion.

The pandemic has unreservedly exposed fundamental flaws in our global system. Beyond any doubt the collective response and cooperation strategy has not only failed but has also aggravated the crisis.

World is in a dire need of cooperation as no one nation can fulfill the people's basic needs on her own. This pandemic and the further complications it has created globally need global solutions. This is what is pledged in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which stands as a unified global strategy to ensure security and prosperity of our planet earth.

Unfortunately, the sudden catastrophe has directly hit the SDGs, as the world is all focused on containing the spread of the virus and addressing its negative and enervating impacts, which is certainly is the right thing to do because the priority now is to save lives.

However, the priority SDGs actions must be focused even in these critical times because these SDGs are directly linked with the response to the pandemic. In fact, achieving the SDGs will build a solid foundation and a steady path to deal with any upcoming global threats. Therefore, achieving Goal 3 – Good Health and Well-being – will mean consolidating the capacity of countries for early warning, risk reduction and management of national and global health risks. Contrarily, this pandemic has adversely undermined the prospects of achieving global health by 2030.

Similarly, UNESCO estimates that some 1.25 billion students have been affected by this pandemic, posing a serious threat to the attainment of Goal 4, Quality Education. Moreover, according to the International Labour Organisation (ILO) 25 million people could lose their jobs during this pandemic.

Critically, in many parts of the world, delivering on clean water and sanitation targets (Goal 6), weak economic growth and the absence of decent work (Goal 8), pervasive inequalities (Goal 10), and above all, a crisis in poverty (Goal 1) and food security (Goal 2) are the worst hit targets due to this vicious pandemic. The World Bank has estimated that the crisis will push some 11 million people into poverty. Unfortunately, these might just be the tip of the iceberg.

This is the time when the world must try to turn the crisis into opportunity and take swift measures to achieve the SDGs. The resources allocated for dealing with the deadly pandemic illustrates that the world has resources to tackle life threatening challenges and achievement of SDGs are one such challenge. Strong political will and commitment is what is required for this purpose, the expertise, passion and capacity demonstrated around the globe in generating and allocating resources to combat the pandemic is unprecedented. We need the same level of commitment and earnestness for the success in this Decade of Action on the SDGs.

The developing countries are facing the indirect heat of Covid-19 though the number of infections in these countries remains low as compared to the developed world. For example, Sub-Saharan Africa, the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) are projecting that for the first time in 25 years, the region will go into a recession. Especially with the large informal economy, social distancing measures are far more economically devastating than in developed countries. At the same time, because daily work is a matter of survival for so many, authorities in some countries are having a difficult time enforcing lockdowns. Additionally, the remittances by the millions of migrant will fall drastically.

According to the UN-WIDEN, 80 to 85 percent of people “newly living in poverty” – on less than \$1.90 a day in the case of a 10 percent contraction – would be in south Asia and

sub-Saharan Africa. But East Asia will also be hit particularly hard, especially if a broader definition of poverty – living on less than \$3.20 or \$5.50 – is applied.

The Working paper by the UN-WIDER has highlighted that the achievement of the 2030 Agenda, and in particular, the [Sustainable Development Goals] on no poverty and zero hunger, is under considerable threat. The world organizations are urging the world leaders to implement an Economic Rescue plan for all which must include the suspension of debt repayments and immediate monetary aid. “We can only beat this virus through coming together as one,” wrote Oxfam. “Developing countries must act to protect their people, and demand action from rich nations to support them. Rich country governments must massively upscale their help – led by the G20.”

In April 2020, the Group of Seven (G7) finance ministers and central bank governors publicly announced they would suspend about \$20 billion-worth of debt repayments for 76 of the world’s poorest countries. G20 finance ministers endorsed a suspension at least until the end of the year which is a significant step in the right direction. Without a massive injection of relief, the charity warned, “over half the global population could be living in poverty in the aftermath of the pandemic.

As the world responds to the aftermath of this brutal pandemic, and strives to restore global prosperity, we must not ignore on addressing fundamental factors in the context of the Sustainable Development Goals. We must not, and cannot concede in our efforts, not even during this global catastrophe. This pandemic has washed away the progress made on the Sustainable Development Goals, but this should not deter us from the continuous efforts. These hiccups will rather motivate us to pace up our efforts during this Decade of Action to restore the losses and work for building a safer, prosperous and sustainable world which will be all equipped and prepared not only to deal with any future natural calamity but also to avoid any of the pandemic.

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