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### Summary record of the 8th meeting

Held at Headquarters, New York, on Tuesday, 8 June 2021, at 10 a.m.

*President:* Mr. Kelapile (Vice-President) . . . . . (Botswana)

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*In the absence of Mr. Akram (Pakistan), Mr. Kelapile (Botswana), Vice-President, took the Chair.*

*The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.*

## **Agenda item 18: Economic and environmental questions (continued)**

### **(c) Statistics (E/2021/24)**

1. **Ms. Vukovich** (Hungary), Vice-Chair of the Statistical Commission, speaking via video link, introducing the report of the Statistical Commission on its fifty-second session (E/2021/24), said that, owing to the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, the Statistical Commission had held its fifty-second session as remote informal meetings, attended by more than 1,000 delegates from 134 countries and 55 international agencies. The meetings had concluded with the adoption of 17 technical decisions to guide the future work of the Statistics Division of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs and the United Nations statistics system as a whole. They included a decision to adopt a new ecosystem accounting framework as part of the System of Integrated Environmental and Economic Accounting, following a multi-year process of consultations involving over 100 experts from around the world. The adoption of the framework was a significant step towards answering questions on the relationship between the economy, society and the environment and how well-being and social progress were measured.

2. The Statistical Commission had requested the Statistics Division to continue leading the coordination with the United Nations statistical system in the preparation of the annual progress report on the Sustainable Development Goals, to be presented to the high-level political forum on sustainable development. The Commission had also endorsed the vision and way forward for the implementation of the new UNdata portal as the main entry point to authoritative statistical data and metadata from the United Nations system and other participating international and regional organizations, in line with the priorities of States and with the Data Strategy of the Secretary-General for Action by Everyone, Everywhere. The Commission had asked the Bureau to review the 50-year-old mandate of the Commission and to reflect on how the modernization of national and global statistical systems could be reflected within the framework of the Commission in order to better serve the data and analysis needs of the Economic and Social Council and other global statistical system stakeholders.

3. The report of the Commission also contained technical decisions on its regular work programme in

fields such as economic statistics, demographic statistics, international migration statistics and the modernization of statistical systems. Over the previous year, data had taken on increased importance, and data from different types of sources needed to be used and integrated effectively in order to take important crisis mitigation and policy decisions. The Commission had welcomed the agile and innovative responses of the global statistical community to the increased demands for timely and disaggregated data in the context of the pandemic.

*Draft decision: Report of the Statistical Commission on its fifty-second session and provisional agenda and dates of the fifty-third session of the Commission*

4. **The President** drew attention to the draft decision entitled “Report of the Statistical Commission on its fifty-second session and provisional agenda and dates of the fifty-third session of the Commission”, contained in chapter I, section A, of the report of the Statistical Commission on its fifty-second session (E/2021/24).

5. *The draft decision was adopted.*

### **(k) United Nations Forum on Forests (E/2021/42)**

*Draft resolution: Programme of work of the United Nations Forum on Forests for the period 2022–2024*

6. **The President** drew attention to the draft resolution entitled “Programme of work of the United Nations Forum on Forests for the period 2022–2024” contained in chapter I, section A, of the report of the United Nations Forum on Forests on its sixteenth session (E/2021/42).

7. **Ms. Sweeb** (Suriname), Chair of the United Nations Forum on Forests, speaking via video link and introducing the report of the Forum on its sixteenth session (E/2021/42), said that, as a technical session, the main outcome of the sixteenth session had been a Chair’s summary of the discussions held. The summary included proposals for transmission to the Forum at its seventeenth session, to be held in 2022, and its input to the high-level political forum on sustainable development in 2021. In addition to adopting a resolution on its programme of work for the period 2022–2024, the Forum had considered the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on forests and the forest sector and had held a high-level round table on major forest-related developments.

8. Participants in the high-level round table had discussed the critical importance of protecting, conserving and restoring nature, in particular forests, to prevent infectious and zoonotic diseases through a One Health approach. Forests had the potential to offset

many of the social, economic and environmental impacts of the pandemic and other global challenges. The Forum proposed that its secretariat, in collaboration with States, partners and stakeholders, should conduct a second assessment to identify the long-term impacts of the pandemic on sustainable forest management, as well as potential solutions and recovery measures.

9. During the session, the Forum had launched its first flagship publication “Global Forest Goals Report 2021”, which provided an overview of actions taken and progress made by members of the Forum towards the achievement of the six global forest goals and 26 targets of the United Nations Strategic Plan for Forests 2017–2030. According to the report, while the world had been making progress in key areas, such as increasing the forest area, those advances were being threatened by the overall worsening state of the natural environment, including land degradation and droughts, pests and invasive species, fires and storms. The Forum had held technical discussions on the implementation of the Strategic Plan on the basis of its thematic priorities for the session: global forest goals 1 (reverse the loss of forest cover), 2 (enhance forest-based benefits), 4 (forest-related financing), 5 (forest governance) and 6 (forest-related cooperation). Participants had discussed the interlinkages between the global forest goals and the Sustainable Development Goals, as well as possible measures and actions to address challenges in achieving the global forest goals. Among the initiatives and actions taken by the Collaborative Partnership on Forests was the development of a work plan for 2021–2024. Phase 1 of the Global Forest Financing Facilitation Network clearing house, which comprised a website and three databases on funding opportunities, information and learning materials on sustainable forest management, had been launched during the sixteenth session.

10. **Mr. Lages** (Portugal), speaking on behalf of the European Union and its member States, said that in the proposed programme budget for 2022, under subprogramme 8, which covered the Forum secretariat, a proposal had been made to reclassify a post from the P-5 to the D-1 level and a post from the P-3 to the P-2 level. Given that the reclassification had not been discussed during the sixteenth session of the United Nations Forum on Forests, he would be grateful for background information on why an additional D-level post was being proposed for a relatively small secretariat, and in particular given that the D-2 post of Director of the secretariat, which should be filled as a matter of urgency, was still vacant.

11. **Mr. Schlaepfer** (Switzerland) said that his delegation reiterated the importance of taking into

account the resolutions that formed the foundation of the mandate of the Forum: to provide a political forum on forests. Concerned that no information had been given to date on the appointment of the Director of the secretariat, his delegation would be grateful for further information on that issue.

12. **Ms. Pullela** (Australia), speaking also on behalf of Canada and New Zealand, said that the three delegations were proud to have participated actively in the sixteenth session of the Forum and looked forward to working closely with the secretariat on the forthcoming budget processes with a view to implementing its programme of work as mandated by Member States.

13. **Mr. Kamiya** (Japan) said that his delegation supported the request of Switzerland and the European Union to amend subprogramme 8 of the budget document. The Forum had neither discussed nor approved the reclassification of a post from the P-5 to the D-1 level. Such an upgrade was not appropriate, in particular given the pending appointment of a D-2 Director position, which had been strongly urged by the Forum. Further information on the appointment should be provided as soon as possible.

14. *The draft resolution was adopted.*

*Draft decision: Report of the United Nations Forum on Forests on its sixteenth session and provisional agenda for its seventeenth session*

15. **The President** drew attention to the draft decision contained in chapter I, section B, of the report.

16. *The draft decision was adopted.*

#### **Agenda item 12: Coordination, programme and other questions**

##### **(c) Mainstreaming a gender perspective into all policies and programmes in the United Nations system (E/2021/52)**

#### **Agenda item 18: Economic and environmental questions (continued)**

##### **(j) Women and development**

#### **Agenda item 19: Social and human rights questions (continued)**

##### **(a) Advancement of women (A/76/38; E/2021/27; E/2021/L.20)**

17. **Ms. Mehrotra** (Director of the United Nations System Coordination Division, United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women)), speaking via video link, introducing the report of the Secretary-General on mainstreaming a

gender perspective into all policies and programmes in the United Nations system (E/2021/52), said that the pandemic had revealed the exaggerated burdens and inequalities that affected women and girls everywhere. Maternal mortality, gender-based violence, the burdens of unpaid care work and the gender digital divide had worsened, erasing past gains. In response to the call by the Secretary-General to place women and girls at the centre of the pandemic response and recovery, socioeconomic response plans had been developed by United Nations country teams that included targeted interventions on sexual and reproductive health services, women's economic empowerment and violence against women. United Nations entities had also worked in collaboration to develop data-powered initiatives such as the COVID-19 Global Gender Response Tracker and the COVID-19 and Gender Monitor.

18. At the national level, the United Nations system continued efforts to mainstream gender equality into its work, including through joint United Nations plans on AIDS; the World Health Organization Global Action Plan for Healthy Lives in Well-Being; and the Spotlight Initiative of the United Nations and the European Union. The Inter-Agency and Expert Group on Gender Statistics and the Inter-Agency and Expert Group on Sustainable Development Goal Indicators also continued to work in support of the production and use of gender statistics, particularly in relation to sex-disaggregated and gender-specific Sustainable Development Goal indicators.

19. In 2020, the United Nations System-wide Action Plan on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women 2.0 (UN-SWAP 2.0) had resulted in system-wide progress being made, despite the challenging circumstances imposed by the global pandemic. A total of 70 entities had reported on their gender mainstreaming performance in 2020, of which 75 per cent had incorporated or were on track to incorporate gender-related results components in their strategic plans. An analysis of results attested to gains being made in interagency initiatives addressing Sustainable Development Goal 5 and to mainstreaming gender equality into work related to the other Goals, in particular to health, peace and security. The number of country teams assessed in the context of the United Nations System-wide Action Plan gender equality scorecard had increased to 38 in 2020, up from 33 in 2019. Of those, 17 had prepared an initial comprehensive report designed to align with the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework planning stage, and 21 had developed an annual progress report.

20. Despite the progress made in accelerating gender mainstreaming in the United Nations system, gaps

remained. Gender analysis and the use of disaggregated data remained largely unavailable or were inconsistently applied. While gender considerations were better integrated into socioeconomic issues, they were still less so in areas like energy, infrastructure and digital inclusion. Socioeconomic response plans to the pandemic also illustrated important gaps in macroeconomic responses and those addressing the care economy, unequal access to resources and the gender pay gap. Insufficient progress had been made on tracking financial resources and establishing financial targets related to gender equality.

21. The report contained several recommendations, including that the United Nations system should provide stronger gender analysis and sex-disaggregated data; strengthen the integration of gender considerations in such technical areas as energy, infrastructure and financial and digital inclusion that held significant potential for reducing gender inequality; and harmonize implementation of financial tracking mechanisms.

22. **Ms. Pullela** (Australia), Vice-Chair and rapporteur of the Commission on the Status of Women, introducing the report of Commission on the Status of Women on its sixty-fifth session (E/2021/27), said that the priority theme of the session had been "Women's full and effective participation and decision-making in public life, as well as the elimination of violence, for achieving gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls". During the session, strong emphasis had been placed on the mutually reinforcing relationship between achieving gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls, and the full, effective and accelerated implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, as well as the gender-responsive implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

23. The Commission had held an interactive dialogue on the theme "Building back better: women's participation and leadership in COVID-19 response and recovery", and had adopted agreed conclusions on the priority theme, which laid out policy recommendations in the following key areas: strengthening normative, legal and policy frameworks; preventing and eliminating violence against women in public life; strengthening gender-responsive institutional reform; increasing the availability of high-quality financing in support of women's participation in public life; strengthening women's voices and leaving no one behind in public life; and addressing the root causes of gender inequality and eliminating barriers to women's full and equal participation. The agreed conclusions sent an important message on the imperative to address the needs of all women and girls in response and recovery policies and programmes, to uphold and promote their

human rights and fundamental freedoms and to facilitate meaningful participation and engagement in all areas of public life. The agreed conclusions provided an important contribution to the work of the Economic and Social Council and the high-level political forum on sustainable development.

24. The Commission placed a strong emphasis on evaluating progress in the implementation of agreed conclusions from previous sessions. During its sixty-fifth session, the Commission had reviewed progress on the agreed conclusions from its sixtieth session on the theme “Women’s empowerment and the link to sustainable development”, including by reviewing national efforts in different regions towards the gender-responsive implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals.

25. During its sixty-sixth session, the Commission would consider the priority theme “Achieving gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls in the context of climate change, environmental and disaster risk reduction policies and programmes” and review progress in the implementation of the agreed conclusions of the sixty-first session on the theme “Women’s economic empowerment in the changing world of work”. It would also review its methods of work and make a recommendation on how best to commemorate the thirtieth anniversary of the adoption of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action during 2025.

*Draft resolution E/2021/L.20: Mainstreaming a gender perspective into all policies and programmes in the United Nations system*

26. **The President** said that the draft resolution contained no programme budget implications.

27. *Draft resolution E/2021/L.20 was adopted.*

*Draft decision: Report of the Commission on the Status of Women on its sixty-fifth session and provisional agenda and documentation for the sixty-sixth session of the Commission*

28. **The President** drew attention to the draft decision entitled “Report of the Commission on the Status of Women on its sixty-fifth session and provisional agenda and documentation for the sixty-sixth session of the Commission”, contained in chapter I, section B, of the report of the Commission on the Status of Women on its sixty-fifth session (E/2021/27).

29. *The draft decision was adopted.*

30. **The President** proposed that the Council should take note of the report of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (A/76/38).

31. *It was so decided.*

**(b) Social development (A/76/61; E/2021/26)**

32. **Ms. Bas** (Director, Division for Inclusive Social Development, Department of Economic and Social Affairs), speaking via video link, introducing the report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of the objectives of the International Year of the Family and its follow-up processes (A/76/61), said that the report focused on the unprecedented effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, quoting preliminary estimates of an additional 88 to 115 million people likely to be pushed into extreme poverty and 150 million additional children likely to be driven into multidimensional poverty. Low-income families had been especially hard hit, resulting in loss of employment, precarious housing situations, lack of access to online schooling and loss of nutrition as a result of school closures. Family-oriented policies had been established to counteract the negative effects of the pandemic on families, mostly focusing on parental leave and care services, as well as financial and utility support. Although efforts had been made to protect women from an apparent surge in domestic violence in families, early assessments indicated that the responses had been uneven and often inadequate. Overall, only one-third of countries had taken action to support unpaid care and strengthen care services for children, older persons and persons with disabilities.

33. The report included a recent analysis of family-oriented priorities, policies and programmes in the implementation of the 2020 Agenda for Sustainable Development, as reported in voluntary national reviews between 2016 and 2019, which indicated that although families were referred to as units of diagnosis or targets, family-oriented policies were not considered an integral part of overall development efforts. The report also included recommendations on policies and legislation banning all forms of violence against children, including corporal punishment. It emphasized that such policies should be accompanied by positive parenting education programmes, including on the detrimental impact of corporal punishment and the benefits of positive, non-violent forms of discipline.

34. With regard to the response to COVID-19, the report included recommendations for enhancing support for working parents, including through expanded child and family benefits and gender-responsive services to reduce the burden of care. With regard to preparations for the thirtieth anniversary of the International Year of the



Family, in 2024, the report included recommendations to focus on research and awareness-raising activities at the national, regional and international levels regarding the impact of technological, migration, urbanization, demographic and climate change trends on families.

35. **Ms. Squeff** (Chair of the Commission for Social Development), introducing the report of the Commission for Social Development on its fifty-ninth session (E/2021/26), said that the priority theme of the hybrid session had been “Socially just transition towards sustainable development: the role of digital technologies on social development and well-being of all” and a ministerial forum had been held on the theme “Promoting multilateralism to realize inclusive, resilient and sustainable recovery from COVID-19 in the context of the decade of action and delivery for sustainable development and its social dimensions”. The theme of the emerging issue had been “Social policy to promote a more inclusive, resilient and sustainable recovery: building back better post COVID-19 for the achievement of the 2030 Agenda in the context of the decade of action and delivery for sustainable development”.

36. Three draft resolutions had been adopted. In the first, on the future organization and methods of work of the Commission for Social Development, the Economic and Social Council decided that the priority theme for the sixtieth session of the Commission would be “Inclusive and resilient recovery from COVID-19 for sustainable livelihoods, well-being and dignity for all: eradicating poverty and hunger in all its forms and dimensions to achieve the 2030 Agenda”. The second draft resolution covered the social dimensions of the New Partnership for Africa’s Development, and the third covered the theme “A socially just transition towards sustainable development: the role of digital technologies on social development and well-being of all”. The Commission had also adopted a resolution that was brought to the attention of the Council on policies and programmes involving youth.

37. During the session, participants had highlighted that digital inequality, which had been a problem before the pandemic, had been exacerbated. The new “digital citizenship” should not be the privilege of a few, but rather digital technologies must be conceived as tools of opportunity for all. It was through open and interactive discussions, including all relevant actors, that it would be possible to fulfil the mandate of the Commission and achieve the goals of the Copenhagen Declaration on Social Development and Programme of Action of the World Summit for Social Development, to fight poverty, achieve full employment and promote social inclusion.

38. **The President** drew attention to the draft proposals contained in chapter I, sections A, B and C of the report of the Commission for Social Development on its fifty-ninth session (E/2021/26).

#### *Section A*

*Draft resolution 1: Future organization and methods of work of the Commission for Social Development*

*Draft resolution 2: Social dimensions of the New Partnership for Africa’s Development*

*Draft resolution 3: Socially just transition towards sustainable development: the role of digital technologies on social development and well-being of all*

39. *Draft resolutions 1, 2 and 3 were adopted.*

#### *Section B*

*Draft decision: Report of the Commission for Social Development on its fifty-ninth session and provisional agenda and documentation for the sixtieth session*

40. *The draft decision was adopted.*

#### *Section C*

*Draft decision 59/101: Nomination of members of the Board of the United Nations Research Institute for Social Development*

41. *Draft decision 59/101 was adopted.*

*Draft decision 59/102: Statute of the United Nations Research Institute for Social Development*

42. *Draft decision 59/102 was adopted.*

### **Agenda item 18: Economic and environmental questions (continued)**

#### **(f) Population and development (E/2021/25)**

43. **Mr. Tiare** (Chair of the Commission on Population and Development) said that he welcomed the adoption by the Commission of a substantive resolution on the special theme of population, food security, nutrition and sustainable development by consensus. The resolution contributed directly to the Sustainable Development Goals that would be reviewed by the 2021 high-level political forum on sustainable development, in particular, Goals 1, 2, 3, 12, 13 and 17 and affirmed the important contribution of the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development to the Implementation of the 2030 Agenda. The Commission had also adopted the draft agenda for its fifty-fifth session and the special theme for its fifty-sixth session, both by consensus.

44. Over the previous two sessions, the Commission had made a significant effort to review its modus operandi in order to address its recent difficulties with adopting a consensus resolution on the special theme and to reinvigorate its work. Consultations had revealed that the lack of consensus had been the result of substantive differences between Member States and lack of political will, not of inadequate working methods, and that the overwhelming majority of Member States preferred to take action by consensus. As the Commission's existing working methods gave it considerable latitude to adjust the annual programme of work, innovations introduced had included involving stakeholders and technical experts to a greater extent, holding interactive panels more often, and promoting greater transparency by holding regular online briefings and consultations and using online platforms.

45. Lastly, conducting business virtually during the pandemic had taught the Commission that in-person, formal meetings were a better vehicle for taking decisions and acting on draft proposals and that beginning informal consultations well ahead of the annual session might contribute to a successful outcome. Nevertheless, the Commission had been able to enlist more high-level speakers and panellists from around the globe through pre-recorded statements and virtual panels.

46. **Mr. Abdelaal** (Egypt) said that his Government attached great importance to the work of the Commission on Population and Development and that it was committed to the full implementation of the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development alongside the Sustainable Development Goals. Egypt had therefore been flexible and willing to compromise in order to achieve a consensus outcome.

47. Recalling the statement delivered by Egypt at the fifty-fourth session of the Commission on Population and Development in explanation of position on the resolution on population, food security, nutrition and sustainable development ([E/CN.9/2021/L.5](#)), he expressed particular concern with the language in paragraph 13 and highlighted the clear understanding that the universal access to reproductive rights remained directly connected in its scope and definition to the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development. The definition of reproductive rights lay within the framework included in the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development held in Cairo in 1994. The reference point for work regarding sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights would remain the recognized language in the

Programme of Action and the 2030 Agenda. In that regard, his delegation did not consider the language in paragraph 13 of the resolution a reference or agreed language. Furthermore, it underscored the overarching reach of paragraph 2 of the aforementioned resolution in reaffirming the sovereign right of each country to implement the recommendations of the Programme of Action or proposals in that resolution, consistent with national laws and development priorities.

*Draft decision: Report of the Commission on Population and Development on its fifty-fourth session and provisional agenda for its fifty-fifth session*

48. **The President** drew attention to the draft decision entitled "Report of the Commission on Population and Development on its fifty-fourth session and provisional agenda for its fifty-fifth session", contained in chapter I, section A, of the report of the Commission on Population and Development on its fifty-fourth session ([E/2021/25](#)).

49. *The draft decision was adopted.*

**(a) Sustainable development** ([E/2021/33](#); [E/2021/L.18](#))

50. **Ms. Fukuda-Parr** (Vice-Chair of the Committee for Development Policy), introducing the report of the Committee for Development Policy on its twenty-third session ([E/2021/33](#)), said that the Committee had, for the first time in its history, conducted its plenary session virtually, and that it had made progress on topics related to the least developed countries and beyond. The Committee had conducted its triennial review of the least developed countries category in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, which threatened to reverse much of the progress that had been made by countries, including the least developed countries, towards achieving sustainable development.

51. The Committee had decided to recommend the graduation of Bangladesh, the Lao People's Democratic Republic and Nepal, with the preparatory period extended from three to five years to account for the extraordinary challenges associated with the pandemic. The Committee had deferred decision on a recommendation for Myanmar and Timor-Leste to 2024. Recommendations were made on the basis of the criteria and additional information provided in supplementary reports and data prepared by the Department of Economic and Social Affairs and the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, also taking into account the conclusions of the Committee's own comprehensive study on the impacts of COVID-19 on least developed and graduating countries and other country-specific considerations presented by graduating countries.

52. The Committee's improved monitoring mechanism included a proposal for the introduction of a crisis response process to be integrated into the mechanism when countries were faced with crises and emergencies, enabling the Committee to keep track of the impacts of the pandemic and other crisis situations. The Committee had also released a policy document addressing development policy and multilateralism in the context of the pandemic; the document proposed solutions aimed at equipping Governments for green, equitable and resilient development, tackling inequality and leaving no one behind, and elements of a new multilateralism in a post-pandemic world.

53. The fifth United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries was expected to adopt the next programme of action for the coming decade. The Committee had proposed the theme of expanding productive capacity for sustainable development and called for the new programme to address the need to strengthen the means of least developed countries to increase resilience to economic and environmental vulnerabilities and incorporate measures that enabled them to benefit more effectively from the support specifically provided.

54. In the Committee's analysis of voluntary national reviews for 2021, it had reflected on how the reviews had addressed pandemic preparedness, leaving no one behind, inequality, gender and productive capacity, as well as underreported Sustainable Development Goal targets. Based on the reviews, the Committee recommended that the Council and Member States should pay more attention to the neglected agendas of structural change, climate change, environment and inequality, known as orphan targets in the 2030 Agenda. The Committee had also recommended active engagement with independent civil society inputs, including the presentation of shadow reports.

55. **Mr. Ligoya** (Observer for Malawi), speaking on behalf of the Group of Least Developed Countries, said that the period under review in the report of the Committee for Development Policy had been marked by unprecedented events of untold consequence for the sustainable development landscape. While graduation was the end goal of all least developed countries, the factors that determined its achievement were a combination of internal and external forces that they did not always control. Thus, seeking the right balance of elements to ensure success did not rely on those countries alone. Rather, as the pandemic had underscored, partnership and cooperation remained key to achieving an equitable sustainable development that would allow those countries to grow and flourish.

56. Welcoming the report of the Committee for Development Policy, which addressed the impact of COVID-19 on the category, he recalled that least developed countries would have to live with the reality of COVID-19 for the foreseeable future, hence the need for consistent support and assistance to graduating countries to ensure a sustainable and irreversible recovery. It had been widely acknowledged in various United Nations reports that the combination of COVID-19 and the pre-existing challenges of debt, climate and weak health systems had served only to further hinder those countries' transformation and structural progress. Taking decisive and united action was therefore necessary, as was continuing to incorporate risk into all development assessments and plans. Only better planning and cooperation would forestall any future derailment of sustainable development. The aim of the recovery should not be to return to pre-crisis development patterns but instead to reframe development towards equality, resilience and environmental sustainability.

57. One of the outstanding items on the Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the decade 2011–2020 was the target to graduate half of the least developed countries by 2020. With the largest number of countries ever currently in the graduation pipeline, it was essential for graduation to be a stepping stone in the development trajectory, not a punishment. Moreover, ambitious targets must be matched by ambitious commitments to a smooth transition, calling for decisions on the basis of continuous objective assessment of the best interests of the graduating countries, as well as adaptability in order to ensure that all graduating countries had a smooth transition and a sustainable, irreversible graduation. He looked forward to continued collaboration and cooperation with the Committee for Development Policy as the least developed countries weathered the COVID-19 pandemic, ramped up action towards 2030 and developed a dynamic new programme of action.

58. **Ms. Fatima** (Bangladesh), thanking the Committee for Development Policy for recommending the graduation of Bangladesh, said that graduation had long been a cherished aspiration of her entire nation, which also happened to be celebrating the fiftieth anniversary of its independence. Her country's Prime Minister, who had envisioned transforming Bangladesh into a middle-income country by 2021 and a developed country by 2041, had led the country to that historic achievement in spite of the unprecedented challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic.

59. The resolution before the Council integrated the notion of continuous monitoring for ensuring sustainable and irreversible graduation and advised the



Committee for Development Policy to further analyse at its triennial review whether the preparatory period extended to the graduating countries would be adequate to manage the impact of the pandemic. Both elements would be critical in monitoring progress towards smooth and sustainable graduation. Vitrally, the resolution contained a recognition of the importance of integrating disaster risk reduction into the smooth transition strategies of graduating countries. Development and trading partners were encouraged to support graduating and recently-graduated countries to reduce disaster risk and build resilience, equipping those countries to build back better after the pandemic and develop resilience against future shocks, including climate change impacts.

60. At the first meeting of the LDC5 Preparatory Committee, of which Bangladesh had been Vice-Chair, discussions had focused on building international solidarity and partnerships for sustainable graduation. She encouraged Member States, all United Nations entities and other stakeholders to remain engaged meaningfully in the process ahead of the LDC V Conference in 2022. The graduation of a least developed country was a testament to both the success of the country itself and to the strength of United Nations-led multilateral partnership. However, amid the ongoing pandemic, graduating countries were concerned that graduation might jeopardize their development journey because of the impact of COVID-19, the loss of specific support measures and such multidimensional vulnerabilities as climate change. It was therefore imperative to ensure continued and strengthened international support measures for graduating and graduated least developed countries.

61. First, graduating and graduated countries required new and improved support structures and clearly established support measures to address every aspect of graduation, including the loss of international support measures (ISMs), financing for development and achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals. Second, graduation monitoring must be enhanced in order to ensure that adequate and timely support measures were in place to prevent countries from sliding back into the least developed category. To date, graduation support had been focused more on the pre-graduation phase; adequate attention to post-graduation ISMs would henceforth be required. Third, the United Nations system and the United Nations country teams must prioritize capacity development in the graduating countries in order to enable them to tackle the challenges associated with graduation. Lastly, graduation – essentially a demand-driven and politically led process – must be incentivized. It should not be a punishment, but instead a reward.

62. **Mr. Vongnorkeo** (Observer for the Lao People's Democratic Republic) said that his delegation appreciated the recommendations and findings of the Committee for Development Policy following the second triennial review and welcomed the Council's endorsement of the recommendation that the Lao People's Democratic Republic should graduate with a five-year preparatory period. That period would grant graduating countries sufficient time to prepare effectively for pandemic recovery and a smooth graduation focused on weathering pandemic-related socioeconomic impacts. His country was committed to graduating from the least developed country category in an irreversible manner. His delegation appreciated the Council's call on the Committee to continue consulting with and monitoring the graduating and graduated countries; the General Assembly would decide whether a five-year preparatory period had been sufficient to address the impact of COVID-19, which had forced his country into a second lockdown since April 2021.

63. The country's readiness for graduation attested to the remarkable achievements that had resulted from national development efforts, with the critical support of international partners. Development partners, the United Nations development system and the international community should therefore commit to enhancing their support and assistance to a graduating country, particularly during the pandemic, ensuring that graduated countries continued to enjoy specific support measures for a certain period, in line with their actual development situations and needs.

64. **Mr. Rai** (Observer for Nepal), thanking the Committee on Development Policy for its continued work to assess the eligibility and readiness of countries for graduation, said that the Committee's triennial review had taken place against the backdrop of the unprecedented and multifaceted crisis sparked by the COVID-19 pandemic. The crisis had accentuated the pre-existing vulnerabilities of the least developed countries, including his own, making the path to sustainable development and irreversible graduation more arduous. Nevertheless, his country was determined to embark upon the path of graduation.

65. Graduation was not an end in itself but instead represented a major milestone in a country's development trajectory, and it could be truly meaningful only if it was sustainable, smooth and irreversible. Nepal commended the Committee for adopting a consultative approach to formulating its recommendations and taking into account the submissions of countries under review, and hoped that such an approach would remain the norm. The preparatory period of five years would allow Nepal additional time to prepare for graduation

while also working to recover from the various impacts of the pandemic.

66. The case of Nepal was unique, as it was the first and only country to be recommended for graduation without meeting the per capita income threshold. Graduation had nevertheless remained an integral national ambition. As his country was on the verge of transitioning from both the low-income and least developed country categories, the loss of access to concessional finance was an area of concern. The impact of graduation on trade would also be considerable. Pandemic-related fallout in the public health system and the economy complicated matters, as it was necessary to plan for recovery and prepare a sustainable transition strategy concurrently. His delegation called upon the United Nations development system, including the United Nations country teams, to bolster their support to graduating countries in planning and implementing smooth transition strategies. Such support would be crucial in helping graduating countries navigate new development cooperation and trade scenarios. Increased support from development and trade partners would be equally critical in that regard. Support measures should be fully enhanced during the transition period so as to ensure that graduation did not amount to punishment of the graduated countries.

67. **Mr. Liu Yanming** (China) said that as COVID-19 continued to spread around the globe, the vast majority of developing countries, especially the least developed countries, had been severely affected, hindering economic and social development and the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. China was sympathetic with the difficulties those countries faced; thus, it actively supported the reasonable requests made by Kiribati and other countries to postpone their graduation. China called on the international community to strengthen solidarity and cooperation, uphold the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities and continue to increase support for the least developed countries, enabling them to overcome their difficulties as soon as possible and build back better.

*Draft resolution E/2021/L.18: Report of the Committee for Development Policy on its twenty-third session*

68. **The President** said that the draft resolution contained no programme budget implications.

69. *Draft resolution E/2021/L.18 was adopted.*

## **(h) International cooperation in tax matters** (continued) (E/2021/45/Add.2)

*Draft decision: Provisional agenda for the twenty-third session of the Committee of Experts on International Cooperation in Tax Matters*

70. **The President** drew attention to the draft decision entitled “Provisional agenda for the twenty-third session of the Committee of Experts on International Cooperation in Tax Matters”, contained in chapter I of the report of the Committee of Experts on International Cooperation in Tax Matters on its twenty-third session (E/2021/45/Add.2).

71. *The draft decision was adopted.*

## **(g) Public administration and development** (continued) (E/2021/44)

72. **Ms. Fraser-Moleketi** (Chair of the Committee of Experts on Public Administration), speaking via video link, said that the overall theme of the session had been “Building inclusive, effective and resilient institutions for sustainable recovery from the coronavirus disease pandemic and timely implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals”. One of the key messages of the Committee of Experts on Public Administration had been that recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic and achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals should go hand in hand, instead of being regarded as sequential or separate.

73. The Committee had underscored that the 2030 Agenda served as a road map to recovery from the pandemic and to building resilience to future shocks. If anything, the pandemic had added to the urgency for accelerated progress towards attaining the Goals. Achieving sustainable development and strengthening resilience required a long-term perspective in policymaking, together with institution building at all levels, based on effective governance for sustainable development and a steadfast commitment to promoting peaceful, just and inclusive societies.

74. On public finance and budgeting, the Committee had emphasized that transparent, accountable and participatory management of public finances was a key element of effective governance, as governments around the world faced the dual challenge of decreasing revenues and increasing expenditures. The Committee had stressed that extraordinary circumstances could not be an excuse for a lack of transparency, accountability and participation. Such a lack would adversely affect the effectiveness of public spending and public service provision, equity in the distribution of public funds, and

the well-being of people, especially of vulnerable and excluded groups.

75. The Committee had recommended that national budgets be aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals. The reorganization of budgets from a traditional format to activity-based budgeting and programme budgeting would be a key step towards enabling Governments to allocate funds for the achievement of the Goals and to monitor outcomes.

76. The Committee had drawn attention to the underutilized potential of public procurement, which, on average, accounted for 13 to 20 per cent of gross domestic product (GDP), in advancing sustainable development. By leveraging public expenditure, Governments could lead by example, stimulating markets for sustainable products and services and helping to steer society towards more sustainable consumption and production patterns. Market mechanisms could be used to expand procurement options but required inspection and enforcement. Supreme audit institutions, backed by adequate legislation, could play a crucial role in monitoring progress.

77. Concerning the public sector workforce, the Committee had highlighted that the pandemic had accelerated the trend of digitalization and flexible work in the public sector, opening up possibilities for new work modalities and new types of contracts. Benefits and compensation schemes and reasonable work contracts for all types of front-line workers should reflect the primacy and changing nature of public sector work and the risks that those workers faced. In that connection, the Committee had drawn attention to inequalities and digital divides across the public sector workforce and the importance of equal opportunity for the provision of digital capacity. For sustainable recovery from the pandemic, public services should be delivered with a focus on the needs of citizens and on workforce management that was in harmony with people's expectations.

78. The Committee had stressed that proactive leadership on the part of Governments and clear, verified information to overcome fake news and mistrust, along with the active engagement of local leaders and civil society groups, would be key to recovery from the pandemic. The Committee had adopted a draft resolution and a draft decision for consideration by the Council and reaffirmed its contribution to the high-level political forum, also noting with appreciation the recent progress towards the operationalization of its 11 principles of effective governance for sustainable development, which the Council had endorsed in 2018.

*Action on recommendations contained in the report of the Committee of Experts on Public Administration on its twentieth session (E/2021/44)*

79. **The President** drew attention to the draft resolution contained in chapter I, section A, of the report.

#### *Section A*

*Draft resolution: Report of the Committee of Experts on Public Administration on its twentieth session*

80. *The draft resolution was adopted.*

81. **The President** drew attention to the draft decision contained in chapter I, section B, of the report.

#### *Section B*

*Draft decision: Dates and provisional agenda of the twenty-first session of the Committee of Experts on Public Administration*

82. *The draft decision was adopted.*

#### **(i) Geospatial information (continued)** (E/2021/L.17)

*Draft decision E/2021/L.17: Dates of the eleventh session of the Committee of Experts on Global Geospatial Information Management*

83. **The President** said that the draft decision contained no programme budget implications.

84. *Draft decision E/2021/L.17 was adopted.*

#### **(l) Transport of dangerous goods (E/2021/10)**

85. **Mr. Hubert** (Chief, Dangerous Goods and Road Safety Management Section, United Nations Economic Commission for Europe), speaking via video link, introducing the report of the Secretary-General on the Work of the Committee of Experts on the Transport of Dangerous Goods and on the Globally Harmonized System of Classification and Labelling of Chemicals (E/2021/10), said that part one of the report contained the draft resolution prepared by the Committee. Part two contained detailed information on the implementation of Economic and Social Council resolution 2019/7. As requested, the Secretary-General had published in the six official languages of the United Nations the twenty-first revised edition of the Recommendations on the Transport of Dangerous Goods, the Model Regulations on the Transport of Dangerous Goods, the seventh revised edition of the Manual of Tests and Criteria and the eighth revised edition of the Globally Harmonized System of Classification and Labelling of Chemicals.

86. The International Maritime Organization, the International Civil Aviation Organization, the Intergovernmental Organization for International Carriage by Rail and the Economic Commission for Europe had already initiated amendments to their prospective legal instruments on the transport of dangerous goods to give effect to the recommended new provisions. Many countries had also updated their registration applicable to domestic and regional transport accordingly, while others still applied older editions.

87. Unfortunately, little information on the status of national implementation of the Recommendations on the Transport of Dangerous Goods was available to the secretariat for countries that did not participate in the work of the Committee or of the Economic Commission for Europe Inland Transport Committee. The Secretary-General should therefore collect more information about the status of implementation of the model regulations worldwide on the transport of dangerous goods by road, rail and inland transport. In particular, the Secretary-General should seek information from all Member States about the competent national authorities entitled to certify on behalf of the State that the packaging design type met the United Nations construction performance requirements and that accordingly, it might bear the United Nations certification mark.

88. The secretariat had collected information on the effective implementation of the Globally Harmonized System worldwide. Some 70 countries, including the major producers of chemical products, had either implemented the system's provisions or were in the process of doing so. In 2019 and 2020, legal instruments on national standards implementing the Globally Harmonized System or allowing its application in one or several sectors had been issued in several countries, while other countries or regions continued to revise or amend the national or regional legal instruments to take into account the regular update of the two-year cycle of the Globally Harmonized System, in accordance with the recommendations of the Committee. In addition, guidance, training and resource materials continued to be updated in 2019 and 2020, along with several capacity-building activities or projects supported by Governments or the private sector that had been carried out by a wide range of United Nations system and other entities.

89. Part three of the report provided information on the activities of the Committee during the biennium 2019–2020. The secretariat and the presiding officers of the subcommittees had made arrangements that had allowed both subcommittees to make progress towards completing their work programmes, in particular, on high-priority items. Lastly, part four of the report

contained the programme of work of the Committee and its schedule of meetings for the biennium 2021–2022.

*Draft resolution: Work of the Committee of Experts on the Transport of Dangerous Goods and on the Globally Harmonized System of Classification and Labelling of Chemicals*

90. **The President** drew attention to the draft resolution entitled “Work of the Committee of Experts on the Transport of Dangerous Goods and on the Globally Harmonized System of Classification and Labelling of Chemicals”, contained in chapter I of the report of the Secretary-General on the work of the Committee of Experts (E/2021/10).

91. *The draft resolution was adopted.*

*The meeting rose at 12.35 p.m.*