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Report of the High-level Committee on Programmes at its fortieth session

(Virtual meeting, 1 and 14 October 2020)

I. Introduction

1. The High-level Committee on Programmes of the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination (CEB) held its fortieth session in a virtual format in two parts, on 1 and 14 October 2020. The agenda of the meeting and the list of participants are contained in annexes I and II, respectively, to the present report. The first part of the session was a continuation of the work on new technologies, data and innovation, featuring items on artificial intelligence, predictive analytics and strategic foresight. The second part was focused on human rights and the well-being of people and the planet, featuring items on inequalities, indigenous peoples and biodiversity.

2. In opening the first part of the session, on 1 October, the Chair of the Committee, Guy Ryder, Director General of the International Labour Organization (ILO), welcomed members and thanked them for their participation through virtual means, as necessitated by the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic. Recalling the decision to cancel the thirty-ninth session of Committee, he noted with satisfaction that work had nevertheless advanced in the interim. Key work streams of the Committee – such as tackling inequalities, innovating United Nations data and statistics, promoting climate action and utilizing nature-based solutions – had taken on added significance in the context of the pandemic, constituting important contributions to efforts towards helping to build back better. He said that it was therefore important that the Committee push its agenda forward, guided by the Sustainable Development Goals and in support of the decade of action to deliver the Goals.

3. The Chair highlighted the day's commemoration by the General Assembly of the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. He reflected that, 25 years after its adoption, it remained the most comprehensive global policy framework and blueprint for action to realize gender equality and the human rights of women and girls everywhere. Unfortunately, however, progress on gender equality had not matched ambition, and the COVID-19 pandemic had exacerbated the situation of women and girls. He recalled long-standing efforts by the Committee and CEB to support gender equality and empowerment and expressed the hope that the anniversary would mark a turning point for women and girls.

4. At the start of the second part of the session, on 14 October, the Chair congratulated the World Food Programme for winning the Nobel Peace Prize.

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Members echoed the congratulations, observing that, in the year of the seventy-fifth anniversary of the founding of the United Nations, such recognition was significant for the Programme and the system at large. The representative of the Programme remarked that the organization was humbled by the award and the recognition of its front-line work.

II. Artificial intelligence

5. In his opening remarks, the Chair re-emphasized the fundamental importance of scientific and technological innovation for meeting many sustainable development challenges and for accelerating human progress throughout the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Noting the transformative power of artificial intelligence to serve as a force for good and sustainable development, the Chair stressed technology's profound implications for the world, including substantial risks and challenges in need of mitigation. The Chair recalled that CEB and the Committee had recognized the vital role of the United Nations system in addressing some of the opportunities and challenges of artificial intelligence and had therefore repeatedly engaged on various aspects of the issue.

A. United Nations system-wide action on the ethics of artificial intelligence

6. Recalling that the Committee had provided a platform to develop the joint United Nations system input on the draft recommendation on the ethics of artificial intelligence, which had been mandated by Member States during the General Conference in November 2019 of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the Chair informed the Committee that the input, which had been approved at the Committee's virtual consultation on the ethics of artificial intelligence, held on 29 July 2020 (see CEB/2020/6/Add.1, para. 2), had been submitted by the Committee Secretary to the ad hoc expert group drafting the recommendation on 28 August 2020. The Chair noted the appreciation for the ad hoc expert group regarding the work of the Committee. He recalled that, at the intersessional meeting, members had considered a discussion paper on supporting United Nations system actions on the ethics of artificial intelligence, prepared by the artificial intelligence ethics drafting group[1] under the leadership of UNESCO.

7. The Chair recalled that members had expressed their initial support for the recommendations in the discussion paper, including potentially forming an inter-agency working group on artificial intelligence, and reminded the Committee that the goal of the current session was to consider and decide on the establishment, purpose and scope of such a working group, as outlined in a scoping paper prepared by UNESCO.

8. The Assistant Director-General for Social and Human Sciences of UNESCO, Gabriela Ramos, in her role as moderator, thanked the Committee in her introductory remarks for the comprehensive input to the ad hoc expert group, which drew attention

[1] The following entities, departments and offices participated in the drafting group: UNESCO (lead), the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, the International Labour Organization, the International Organization for Migration, the International Telecommunication Union, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, the United Nations Children's Fund, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Global Pulse, the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women and the Office of the Special Adviser to the Secretary-General on Digital Cooperation.

to a variety of interconnected and interrelated issues in relation to artificial intelligence, to be reflected in further iterations of the draft recommendation. The draft recommendation would be the basis of negotiations with Member States in April and June 2021, ahead of its planned final adoption by Member States at the UNESCO General Conference in November 2021. She noted that the draft recommendation on the ethics of artificial intelligence could serve as a compass for addressing both the opportunities and the negative consequences of artificial intelligence, such as the spread of artificial intelligence-powered disinformation, with all of its implications for human rights and democracy, and the exacerbation of biases. In that respect, the Assistant Director-General for Social and Human Sciences of UNESCO called for proactive thinking beyond the traditional legal approaches and emphasized the importance of putting in place human rights and ethical safeguards to ensure that technologies would be shaped in a way that benefited humanity and the planet, including ensuring the transparency, accountability, safety, explainability and responsibility of artificial intelligence systems.

9. The Assistant Director-General for Social and Human Sciences of UNESCO stated that ethics was an all-encompassing element that embedded human rights, non-discrimination, gender equality, the right to privacy and the protection of the environment and that it was all-pervading, given that it concerned both the substance of the issues and the processes surrounding them, including decision-making, governance, technological capacity-building and inclusiveness. Consequently, ethics should inform all stages of the artificial intelligence life cycle – research, design, development and deployment – and the processes surrounding it, while the role of the United Nations system in supporting Member States in the implementation of the draft recommendation, including by supporting their capacity-building with regard to artificial intelligence, would be crucial.

10. Noting that the purpose of the segment was to discuss and agree on the establishment and scope of an inter-agency working group on artificial intelligence, the moderator said that the aim of the group would be to combine the ethical and technological pillars of the United Nations to provide a solid foundation for current and future system-wide efforts on artificial intelligence, with a view to ensuring respect for human rights and accelerating progress on the Sustainable Development Goals. The inter-agency working group, to be led by UNESCO and the International Telecommunication Union (ITU), would aim to gather United Nations system expertise on artificial intelligence, in particular in support of the CEB and Committee work streams on the ethics of artificial intelligence and the strategic approach and road map for supporting capacity development (see CEB/2019/1/Add.3), while ensuring collaboration on, coordination of and the contribution to various related artificial intelligence measures, emerging technologies and data initiatives to avoid duplication and ensure synergies, cooperation and alignment. The working group would also aim to create synergies with the Committee's informal foresight network.

11. ITU, in its role as the proposed co-leader of the inter-agency working group, welcomed the UNESCO proposal and stressed that bringing together the two Committee artificial intelligence tracks on ethics and capacity development, respectively, bearing in mind the complex and multifaceted nature of artificial intelligence, would result in a more harmonized, efficient and impactful approach. ITU emphasized the need to draw on the expertise of the United Nations system as a whole.

12. The Committee benefited from a brief introductory presentation by representatives of Young UN, outlining the perspectives of Young UN and Young UNESCO. On the basis of their think piece on the ethics of artificial intelligence, which had been shared with the Committee in advance of the meeting, Young UN called for ambitious action on artificial intelligence and highlighted the important role of the United Nations in

addressing the risks and opportunities of artificial intelligence in consultation with all stakeholders, including young people. However, in order for the United Nations to develop innovative solutions to address artificial intelligence issues, significant actions were necessary, such as engaging key players in the field of artificial intelligence, including technology companies; addressing the reluctance of some actors to develop new international legally binding frameworks on the ethics of artificial intelligence, building on current UNESCO work to develop the recommendation; and engaging with a diverse group of young people – not only "privileged" ones – meaningfully as experts, creators and decision makers to harness their talent globally.

13. In the ensuing discussion, members welcomed the proposal to establish an inter-agency working group on artificial intelligence, to be led by UNESCO and ITU, and recognized the importance of ensuring system-wide collaboration, coordination and coherence, in particular by combining the work streams of the Committee on the ethics of artificial intelligence and artificial intelligence capacity development. Members emphasized that the working group should align itself closely with existing United Nations processes and mechanisms, such as the Internet Governance Forum, the Technology Facilitation Mechanism, the Road Map for Digital Cooperation and the Data Strategy of the Secretary-General for Action by Everyone, Everywhere to avoid duplication, respond to mandates given by Member States and build on existing system-wide capacities. The need to link the work of the inter-agency group to the resident coordinator system at the country level through the United Nations Sustainable Development Group was underscored. In addition to being a mechanism for United Nations system-wide coordination and sharing of lessons learned, the proposed working group was understood to be a platform to consolidate and develop artificial intelligence tools and capacities, including by advancing the implementation of the United Nations system-wide strategic approach and the road map for supporting capacity development on artificial intelligence and by providing guidance on artificial intelligence to the United Nations system. The need to build internal system-wide capacity with regard to artificial intelligence, as well as to increase the responsible adoption of technologies using such intelligence within the United Nations system, was recognized.

14. The Committee stressed the importance of leaving no one behind with regard to the development, design, application and access to artificial intelligence, and several members highlighted the need for inclusion of specific groups, including women and girls, young people, older persons, minorities, migrants and displaced persons and other marginalized and vulnerable communities. It was noted that the United Nations system should support Member States in their artificial intelligence capacity development by promoting a whole-of-government approach and ensuring that all relevant stakeholders, such as civil society, academia, labour unions and the private sector, would be part of the process. Members drew attention to the impact of artificial intelligence on human rights and data privacy and emphasized the fundamentality of strong ethical and human rights frameworks, as well as adequate laws and regulations to protect human rights and labour rights in that field in order to have a positive impact on artificial intelligence incentive structures.

15. Recognizing the specific challenges of developing and least developed countries with regard to artificial intelligence, including the ownership and generation of reliable data, Committee members noted the need to overcome the digital and technological divide while it was acknowledged that artificial intelligence had the potential to further widen the gap, including between rural and urban populations. It was noted that, while the specific future effects of artificial intelligence were unknown, predictions foresaw a reshoring of jobs to developed countries, putting further strain on the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals.

16. Members noted the need to mitigate the negative and harmful effects and uses of artificial intelligence, such as cybercrime, risks to personal data, misinformation and the misuse of artificial intelligence in the domain of conflict prevention and peace. In that regard, several members emphasized the need for an intergovernmental mechanism to work with relevant stakeholders to set global standards, enhance global governance and agree on appropriate regulation of artificial intelligence, in line with standards for ethical, human and children's rights. It was noted that alignment with environmental and sustainability standards, as well as opportunities and challenges with regard to the use of artificial intelligence in the context of financial services, would need to be considered carefully.

17. In summarizing the discussion, the Chair concluded by noting the full support of the Committee for the establishment of an inter-agency working group on artificial intelligence and requesting UNESCO and ITU to develop and share the draft terms of reference electronically with the Committee intersessionally, taking into account the guidance received by the Committee.

Conclusion

18. **The Committee approved the establishment of an inter-agency working group on artificial intelligence, to be co-led by UNESCO and ITU, and requested UNESCO and ITU to develop and share the draft terms of reference electronically for its review.**

B. Follow-up to the United Nations system-wide strategic approach and road map for supporting capacity development on artificial intelligence

19. The Chair recalled that, under ITU leadership, the Committee had developed the United Nations system-wide strategic approach and road map for supporting capacity development on artificial intelligence as part of the wider effort within CEB to address the implications of new and emerging technologies on sustainable development. Noting that the Board had endorsed the strategic approach and road map in May 2019, he emphasized that the strategic approach had already highlighted the importance of the ethical and human rights implications of artificial intelligence technology and consequently had close links to the Committee's ethics of artificial intelligence work stream.

20. The Committee had received a succinct update during the Committee virtual consultation on ethics of artificial intelligence on progress in the implementation of the strategic approach and initial indications on the way forward. The Chair noted that in order to advance the implementation of the strategic approach, ITU had since conducted a mapping exercise of existing artificial intelligence initiatives corresponding to the plan of action as set out in the strategic approach and had identified a number of gaps and corresponding actions to be prioritized to further the implementation of the strategic approach. On the basis of that preliminary gap analysis effort, the Committee was invited to provide guidance on which areas of the strategic approach merited further focused attention by the United Nations system under ITU leadership and coordination, and where appropriate, within the confines of the inter-agency group on artificial intelligence, the establishment of which the Committee had supported.

21. A representative of ITU, Preetam Maloor, provided the Committee with an overview on the progress and initial outcomes of the mapping exercise and gap analysis, noting that the Committee had been agile in reacting to the progress being made in the field of artificial intelligence and to the implications of artificial

intelligence for the United Nations system – having introduced a stream of work dedicated to artificial intelligence since 2017. Noting that the strategic approach covered a range of technical, ethical, socioeconomic and human rights challenges of artificial intelligence, in particular those related to developing countries, in order to achieve the objectives set out in the overall strategic approach, ITU had carried out a preliminary gap analysis effort by (a) mapping out existing artificial intelligence initiatives by the United Nations system and other stakeholders, which had been put forward across various sectors through the strategic approach and road map; and (b) identifying some gaps in artificial intelligence-related activities which would help the United Nations system prioritize strategic actions. Observing the varied nature of and reasons for existing gaps, including a lack of inter-agency coordination, limited resources and a lack of certainty about how artificial intelligence technologies would evolve, Mr. Maloor called attention to the findings and recommendations of the analysis and outlined the specific areas in need of further system-wide engagement. Following the finalization of a more detailed gap analysis with a view to facilitating greater multi-stakeholder coordination, informal groups of interested entities would be convened to focus on the implementation of recommendations prioritized by the Committee.

22. In the ensuing discussion, members welcomed ITU leadership in driving the implementation of the strategic approach and road map, voicing their appreciation of the preliminary gap analysis. Members welcomed the recommendations contained in the gap analysis and highlighted several key areas in which they saw merit for the United Nations system to further engage. It was felt that advising and supporting Member States in the creation of national and regional artificial intelligence and digital strategies was vital to closing the digital divide and leaving no one behind, including the most vulnerable and marginalized populations. The need to support Member States in strengthening their capacity to collect, analyse and share open, interoperable and disaggregated data sets was noted. Building on efforts towards implementing a United Nations system strategy on the future of work (CEB/2019/1/Add.2) and on the future of education and learning (CEB/2019/1/Add.4), which were developed by the Committee and endorsed by CEB in May 2019, the need to increase artificial intelligence-related human capacity, in particular in the workforce, was expressed. Members emphasized the need to strengthen the United Nations system's internal capacity with regard to artificial intelligence, including through engagement with the private sector and academia, and it was noted that strengthening system-wide coordination of strategic foresight exercises with a specific focus on artificial intelligence and its impact would benefit the system. The recommendation to establish a task force of United Nations procurement professionals and artificial intelligence experts to study procurement standards was welcomed, and the significance of including United Nations legal and information technology expertise was stressed. Members underscored the need to advance and maintain strong ethical and human rights safeguards, ensuring that artificial intelligence developments protected the poorest and most marginalized and vulnerable populations in particular, including women and girls. It was suggested that frameworks, policies, guidelines, laws and regulations be developed through an inclusive process, allowing all relevant stakeholders, including civil society and organized labour, to contribute.

23. Some Members stressed the need to build on and create synergies with existing initiatives, mechanisms and platforms to avoid duplication and clarify roles, including work done by the Statistical Commission, the Committee of the Chief Statisticians of the United Nations System, the Global Working Group on Big Data for Official Statistics and efforts launched under the Road Map for Digital Cooperation. It was noted that the application of artificial intelligence should be measured against potential climate and environmental impacts, and the environmental and carbon footprint of

artificial intelligence technologies should be considered carefully. Some members indicated that they intended to send further comments and guidance in writing.

Conclusion

24. **The Committee welcomed the preliminary gap analysis and requested ITU to share the final revised and detailed gap analysis with the Committee intersessionally.**

25. **The Committee requested ITU to take note of the feedback received and to take it into consideration in formulating next steps to advance the implementation of recommendations prioritized by the Committee through the appropriate mechanisms, including the inter-agency working group on artificial intelligence that the Committee had agreed to form.**

III. Progress report on the Committee's pilot predictive analytics exercise

26. The Chair recalled the Committee's decision at its thirty-eighth session, in October 2019, and the subsequent endorsement by CEB, at its second regular session of 2019, to undertake an inter-agency, inter-pillar predictive analytics pilot exercise to promote innovative approaches to enhance evidence-based support for sustainable development. Launched in February 2020 under the leadership of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the project was aimed at responding to the United Nations system's shared and urgent challenge to tackle the interconnectedness of displacement, climate risks, food insecurity, increased violence and threats to livelihoods in the Sahel region.

27. In his role as Project Lead, the Special Adviser on Climate Action of UNHCR, Andrew Harper, presented an update on the initiative. He explained that, through the project, it was endeavoured to use data in a more effective way for anticipatory planning across humanitarian, development and peacebuilding pillars in support of the United Nations integrated strategy for the Sahel and of the region's governments, with a view to replicating the approach in other operations around the world. He stressed the complexity of the environment, pointing to the impact of climate change and other megatrends on the "triple nexus" in the region.

28. The Special Adviser on Climate Action said that there was significant data and analytics capacity within the United Nations system and called for more data sharing, including with the Humanitarian Data Exchange, known as "HDX", and Global Pulse, as well as for obtaining non-traditional data from social media and crowdsourcing. He cited a number of existing resources and best practices in predictive analytics in the humanitarian, development and peacebuilding fields that would help to jump-start the project. He pointed to opportunities arising from achieving alignment among United Nations system organizations through the data strategy of the Secretary-General and from cooperation through a regional data and knowledge hub in Dakar.

29. The Special Adviser on Climate Action reported that, to date, 22 United Nations system entities had been consulted on the pilot predictive analytics exercise, through digital surveys and more than 50 in-depth interviews, to establish what they wanted to achieve in the region, the data that they required to do so and how a predictive analytics model could serve their interests. Such internal discussions were supplemented by engagement with public sector and private sector researchers who possessed relevant expertise and data. Recommendations that emerged included to anchor the effort in the region through an existing body (such as the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel or the Economic Community of West African

States), utilize expertise within the Humanitarian Data Exchange to build regional capacity, ensure that United Nations system entities submit data in a standard format that could be automated and establish a two-way link with national statistical agencies and strengthen their capacity as needed. If the United Nations system invested in getting the data right, it would be better equipped to anticipate major challenges confronting the Sahel and better prepared and coordinated to take action on early warnings. The key question identified was: based on current forecasting of climate impacts, which populations would be most at risk in the next five years?

30. In the discussion that followed, members expressed their appreciation for the update and support for the pilot project. The data-driven approach to programming was welcomed, given in particular that appreciation for science and data-driven decision-making had been accelerated by COVID-19. In particular, predictive analytics were valuable for identifying blind spots. Hope was expressed that the findings and results of the pilot project could be applied in other contexts and regions.

31. It was highlighted that, at the request of the Secretary-General, the Deputy Secretary-General had been leading an inter-agency task force to lift the United Nations response in the Sahel and stressed that the pilot predictive analysis capability under development should be aligned with the implementation of the Sahel strategy. Members found it important to build on existing work, avoid overlaps and capitalize on synergies. There was agreement on the need to focus on identifying decision-making processes that could benefit from predictive analytics, rather than producing the analytics as an end in itself. Members echoed the importance of grounding the work in the region. It was suggested that, to do so, the initiative partner with local scholars and data centres. The need for methodological safeguards within the project to offset the risks inherent in data-driven predictive analytics – such as bias, unrepresentative or unvetted data, and the misuse of data – was stressed. Similarly, it was observed that it would be important to analyse the normative assumptions about human rights, gender and other considerations at the point of design, as well as to ensure adequate data protection safeguards.

32. A number of organizations outlined specific means through which they could support the pilot exercise. The representative of the Development Coordination Office offered to connect the project with resident coordinator offices in the region. The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) would share a four-step data analytics process on environment, climate and fragility in the Sahel. The representative of the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS offered to have its regional strategic information experts contribute to the data and analytics and to provide links to community-led organizations and civil society leaders. The International Atomic Energy Agency put forward its nuclear isotope techniques to access aquifers in the Sahel, and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations extended its new Hand-in-Hand geospatial platform to contribute to filling data gaps. The representative of the World Meteorological Organization expressed interest in continuing to engage in the work, in particular through its climate models and its local, national and regional partners in climate centres and hydrological agencies.

33. Expressing his appreciation for the support and comments, the Special Adviser on Climate Action noted the importance of seizing that opportunity to improve decision-making and the allocation of resources in the Sahel to make a real difference. He would follow up on the work on the inter-agency task force in that area and continue discussions with the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel and other regional bodies, including the Continental Early Warning System of the African Union, with the goal of transferring ownership of the pilot to the region.

Conclusion

34. **The Committee took note of the progress made in the pilot predictive analytics exercise.**

IV. Progress report on the activities of the Committee's informal foresight network

35. Recalling that the foresight network had been formed to provide an open, informal platform among interested member entities to promote foresight capacities across the system, foster cross-agency and system-wide collaboration and learning, and inform and enrich the Committee's work, the Chair invited the Head of Futures Literacy of UNESCO, Riel Miller, to provide an update on the organization's recent activities and upcoming plans, in his capacity as Network Coordinator.

36. Stating that the Committee had been prescient in recognizing the value of strategic foresight, the Head of Futures Literacy reported that the COVID-19 pandemic had provided an opportunity to rethink how to use the future. In recent months, he had seen tremendous enthusiasm across the United Nations system to integrate new and different ways of thinking about the future into work on the ground. He described a number of bilateral efforts towards using that capacity to imagine the future differently and learn by doing. As examples, he cited a series of future literacy laboratories organized by the regional coordination offices that allowed participants to reveal their anticipatory assumptions, as well as a recent laboratory organized by UNESCO with 30 Syrian refugees that revealed their potential to overcome a lack of imagination and to think about a future that was not based on the past. He invited Committee members to consider presenting their entities' work on using the future at the High-Level Futures Literacy Summit, to be held online from 8 to 12 December 2020, as part of a virtual One United Nations showcase.

37. The Head of Futures Literacy stated that such initiatives demonstrated how the United Nations system could work together to use the future – not an artificial, top-down future, but a bottom-up future. There had been a time when statistics as a science was unknown; today, he observed, the ability to use the future was completely inadequate for the challenges facing humanity. Here, he saw the potential for the United Nations system to infuse its organizations with that capacity and lead by example. The network would allow the United Nations system to learn about and build that capability together.

38. Members appreciated the progress report and welcomed cooperating to develop strategic foresight capacity in the United Nations system. They recognized that humanity appeared to be poorly equipped to understand and cope with an inherently complex world, and one of the main challenges for the United Nations system was to enhance people's ability to take advantage of the only certainty, which was uncertainty. Learning to use the future more effectively offered significant avenues towards that objective, and United Nations system staff were well positioned to help to make that happen. However, it was observed that that required new ways of thinking and capabilities that many staff did not have and that would take time to acquire. Moving from theory to practice, and leveraging that capacity for the benefit of decision-making mechanisms, were seen as important steps forward.

39. A number of entities expressed support for and interest in engaging with the Network to build mutual capacity and looked forward to participating in the Futures Literacy Summit. The good cooperation between entities was appreciated, in particular the advice and support provided by UNESCO. ILO reiterated that its

International Training Centre was particularly interested to contribute to the work of the Network.

40. The Head of Futures Literacy thanked the Committee for its support and encouraged entities to tap into the Network already in the design phase of projects to benefit from the collective knowledge.

Conclusion

41. **The Committee took note of the progress made to advance the activities of the informal Committee foresight network.**

V. Progress report on the activities of the Committee's Task Team on Inequalities

42. In introducing this item, the Chair stressed that it was vital to ensure that the United Nations system did its utmost to contribute towards stemming a rising tide of inequality, exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. The Shared United Nations System Framework for Action on Equality and Non-Discrimination, endorsed by CEB in 2016, had been developed within the Committee to promote a more coordinated and integrated approach among organizations on inequalities. The Chair recalled that, in view of gaps in its implementation, the Committee's Task Team on Inequalities had been re-established in 2019 to strengthen the United Nations system's impact and visibility in this area. The task team was pursuing its workplan under the leadership of the representatives of the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women) and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), whom the Chair thanked and invited to provide an update.

43. A representative of UN-Women, Aparna Mehrotra, observed that the COVID-19 crisis had elevated the issue of inequalities and resulted in much regression, specifically with respect to women, demanding that the United Nations system redouble its efforts in response. Illustrating specific evidence of inequalities and markers of disadvantage and marginalization, she cited a number of statistics on the health, social and economic consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic, demonstrating in particular its grave effects on women and setbacks for gender equality. She said that it was important for each entity of the United Nations system to articulate how inequalities were manifested within their individual mandates, for example in terms of food security, education, social protection, gender equality and the empowerment of women. She cautioned that, just five years into 2030 Agenda, worsening inequalities were jeopardizing progress towards the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals. Failure to mount a strong and coherent response to COVID-19 would not only deepen the health crisis but also create a downward spiral, intensifying the economic crisis leading to a humanitarian one, exacerbating inequalities. She stated that addressing inequalities must be at the centre of the United Nations system's efforts, and that organizations had to come together to deliver a coherent response. She said that the task team had been privileged to provide input on the July 2020 lecture of the Secretary-General on Nelson Mandela and invited the co-lead from OHCHR to report on its other activities.

44. Complementing the presentation by the representative of UN-Women, a representative of OHCHR, Craig Mokhiber, reported that the task team was acting on its mandate to strengthen leadership, visibility, coordination and collective impact on inequalities; boost Goal 10; integrate the Framework for Action into the work of the United Nations system; and ensure that the organizations lead by example themselves. Twenty-two entities were contributing to the 18-month workplan for the task team.

He recalled the workshop held virtually in March 2020, at which challenges, obstacles and opportunities related to the struggle against inequalities had been identified, and concrete actions that formed the basis of the task team's current activities had been proposed. He lauded the landmark speech of the Secretary-General on inequalities – to which the task team had contributed – as bold, principled and a catalyst for the system's work to push back on inequalities, and noted plans for it to be shared with United Nations system leadership with other key resources on inequalities. A policy brief developed by the task team, entitled "COVID-19, inequalities and building back better", was nearly ready for launch, and other activities were under way, for example a project on inequalities and public services in rural areas, and collaborative efforts towards integrating inequalities into the COVID-19 socioeconomic response of the United Nations, common country analyses, United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Frameworks and country programming. He observed that a sense of urgency around combating inequalities was being felt across the system, in part due to the revelation in the wake of the pandemic of the deep structural roots of inequalities. He called upon all United Nations system entities to rally to the cause to make a difference on inequalities.

45. In the ensuing discussion, members expressed appreciation for the task team's efforts, as well as the leadership of UN-Women and OHCHR. The Committee's contribution to support the decade of action for the Sustainable Development Goals would remain important, and efforts towards addressing and mitigating inequalities should be at the forefront. A number of entities represented on the task team recommitted themselves to providing support and engagement, while others conveyed their organizations' interest in joining. There was a sense that the task team had already helped to increase cooperation across the system, with the aim of achieving a more coordinated approach to promote equality and non-discrimination.

46. A number of members outlined specific activities rooted in the Framework for Action that they were pursuing within their organizations to reduce inequalities and thereby contribute to efforts towards supporting the Sustainable Development Goals, in particular Goals 5 and 10. Indeed, it was observed that inequality was a central pillar of many strategic plans of United Nations organizations, and there was an opportunity to do better on the basis of collective knowledge.

47. Combining the expertise and analytical capacity of the system, the Committee commended the task team's input on the 2020 lecture of the Secretary-General on Nelson Mandela. The task team was encouraged to use his speech not only for advocacy but also as a framework for its work going forward, including in support of a new social contract as called for by the Secretary-General. Members welcomed the forthcoming policy brief on COVID-19, inequalities and building back better, acknowledging the leadership of UN-Women and the Department of Economic and Social Affairs in its production.

48. It was stated that the task team should continue its expansive approach, going beyond economic and income inequalities, considering all inequalities and underlying vulnerabilities at a systemic level. The COVID-19 pandemic was seen as an opportunity to address the fundamental pre-existing problems of rights and justice. More work was needed on the collection of data, which was fragmented or not available, in particular with regard to disadvantaged groups, so that it could be deployed to support policy and programmatic work at the country level.

49. The Committee recognized the importance of strengthening coordination with various mechanisms of the United Nations Sustainable Development Group to operationalize policies originating with CEB and the Committee (including the forthcoming policy brief) so that United Nations country teams could take a holistic approach towards helping to create a more inclusive future and ensure that inequality

was a part of building back better. Mainstreaming inequalities into common country analyses and cooperation frameworks was seen as important and, in that context, it was observed that the task team could support the efforts of the Development Coordination Office as it guided the development of the country programming tools. The task team could also consider the findings of the reviews of the COVID-19 socioeconomic response plans conducted within the United Nations Sustainable Development Group task teams and identify opportunities to contribute towards closing gaps related to human rights, gender equality and women's empowerment. Efforts towards engaging with economists in resident coordinators' offices were welcomed specifically, as the importance of grounding macroeconomic policies in the United Nations normative agenda, including on equality and non-discrimination, was reinforced. In addition, the task team was encouraged to further explore horizontal and spatial inequalities at the country level.

50. Given the focus in Goal 10 on inequalities within and among countries, it was observed that it should feature strongly in the new regional architecture. The equality agenda should be at the heart of the work of the regional collaborative platforms and could be mainstreamed into the workplans of the issues-based coalitions.

51. The importance of linking the task team's efforts towards other Committee work streams, including on biodiversity and indigenous peoples, was stressed. Connections were also made to the United Nations Decade on Ecosystem Restoration (2021–2030) and the United Nations Food Systems Summit.

52. Other suggestions for the task team's consideration included helping to inform the elaboration of indicators for target 10.7 of the Sustainable Development Goals on the facilitation of orderly, safe and responsible migration; formulating recommendations to Member States on guidance to meet the aspiration to leave no one behind, which could be provided to the United Nations Development System in the context of negotiations on the 2020 quadrennial comprehensive policy review of operational activities for development of the United Nations system; looking at the role of discriminatory laws in creating and worsening inequalities; and adding a focus on micro, small and medium enterprises in its work.

53. In her closing remarks, the representative of UN-Women said that she appreciated the support for coherence across the system. She encouraged the organizations to pursue common action over and above advocacy and to strive to depict the face of inequality as it related to their respective mandates. She stressed that the effort on inequalities had to be tied to countries and societies. The representative of OHCHR thanked members for their comments, which would be taken on board and would strengthen the task team's efforts.

54. The Chair commended the Task Team on Inequalities on the products that it had delivered to date and encouraged it to convert intention into action. The Committee would come back to that topic at a future session to take stock of progress.

Conclusion

55. **The Committee took note of the progress made by the Committee's Task Team on Inequalities.**

VI. Building an inclusive, sustainable and resilient future with indigenous peoples: draft call to action of the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination

56. The Chair, in making the link with the previous agenda item, stressed that discrimination, abuse and lack of access to justice defined inequality for many, in particular indigenous peoples, who continued to face widespread discrimination and marginalization. He recalled that, in November 2015, the system-wide action plan for ensuring a coherent approach to achieving the ends of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, developed through the Inter-Agency Support Group on Indigenous Peoples' Issues, had been brought to the attention of CEB as an important tool at the disposal of the United Nations system. The Chair recalled that, at the Committee's thirty-eighth session, in 2019, members had noted that the implementation of the system-wide action plan on the rights of indigenous peoples had been uneven. It was proposed that, in order to support efforts towards revitalizing the system-wide action plan, CEB could consider a short policy statement to bring attention to the issue. Subsequently, the Inter-Agency Support Group had prepared such a policy statement through a dedicated task team. The call to action on building an inclusive, sustainable and resilient future with indigenous peoples was before the Committee at its fortieth session.

57. The Deputy Executive Director of the United Nations Population Fund, Diene Keita, as Co-chair of the Inter-Agency Support Group on Indigenous Peoples' Issues, briefed the Committee on the call to action, noting that the discussion came at a critical time, given that the COVID-19 pandemic was having a disproportionately devastating impact on the more than 476 million indigenous persons around the world. She noted that, while the aim of the system-wide action plan on the rights of indigenous peoples was to support the United Nations in advancing the rights enshrined in the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, it had not had the impact that was envisaged, in particular at the country level. That year, which marked the fifth anniversary of the action plan, provided the United Nations system with an opportunity to revitalize the action plan and redouble the system's collective efforts towards promoting the rights of indigenous peoples. The Deputy Executive Director of the United Nations Population Fund said that the proposed CEB call to action was aimed at (a) ensuring more systematic participation of indigenous peoples in United Nations processes and initiatives that affect them; (b) strengthening targeted actions at the country level to support the rights of indigenous peoples and learning from good practices; (c) ensuring greater accountability and visibility for the action plan; and (d) strengthening the disaggregation of data on indigenous peoples to ensure greater visibility of indigenous peoples and their situation.

58. The Director of the Office of Intergovernmental Support and Coordination for Sustainable Development of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations, Marion Barthélemy, as Co-chair of the Inter-Agency Support Group on Indigenous Peoples' Issues, noted that indigenous peoples were among those groups considered to be the furthest behind in the 2030 Agenda, and world leaders had committed themselves to reaching the furthest behind first. Indigenous peoples were also important partners for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. She said that, at the global level, the United Nations system could better support the engagement of indigenous peoples in important United Nations processes and conferences, and that the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development was a good example, as it systematically included indigenous peoples through the system of major groups and other stakeholders. At the country level, more needed to be done to support the resident coordinator and the United Nations country team to ensure the

participation of indigenous peoples in United Nations country processes and help Member States to establish mechanisms for consultation and dialogue with indigenous peoples.

59. In the ensuing discussion, members recognized both the devastating impact COVID-19 had had on indigenous communities and the long-standing discrimination faced by indigenous peoples, in particular indigenous women and girls within and outside their communities. Specific challenges raised during the discussion included threats to their ancestral ways and lands, poor health and education systems, the impact of climate change, the digital divide, internal displacement and the increase in threats to indigenous human rights defenders. It was recognized that indigenous peoples were resilient and adaptive to the challenges that they faced, served as important actors in their communities and should be included in decision-making, incorporating their perspective and rights in devising and implementing policies.

60. It was noted that a lesson learned from other system-wide action plans, such as those on disability, women and young people, was the importance of having indicators to measure progress. To ensure that the system-wide action plan was supported with greater action on the ground, the need for a greater focus on the involvement of indigenous peoples in common country analyses, cooperation framework and Socioeconomic Response Plan processes was emphasized. The link between that initiative and the Committee's work on biodiversity and nature-based solutions for sustainable development was also highlighted.

61. In her closing statement, the Deputy Executive Director of the United Nations Population Fund, welcoming the feedback, underlined that the Inter-Agency Support Group on Indigenous Peoples' Issues had worked with all those involved, incorporating points from the decision of the Executive Committee, complementing and reinforcing it, in particular by bringing the United Nations wide coherence and system wide approach.

62. In summarizing the discussion, the Chair welcomed all the positive reactions and support for the statement, and highlighted the Committee's overall support to boosting efforts towards working collaboratively to strengthen coherence, consistency and the impact of the United Nations system's work in support of the rights of indigenous peoples. The Chair noted the Committee's approval of the draft call to action, subject to minor modifications mentioned during the discussion, for onward transmission to CEB for endorsement, as part of the Committee meeting summary.

Conclusion

63. **The Committee approved the draft call to action on indigenous peoples, updated with suggested changes, for onward transmission to CEB for endorsement.**

VII. Biodiversity and nature-based solutions for sustainable development

64. In his opening remarks, the Chair underscored the close linkages with the Committee's previous segments on inequalities and indigenous peoples. He recalled the discussions held by the Board in May 2020, which considered the urgency of reversing the current trajectory of biodiversity loss, the degradation of nature and climate change. The implications of biodiversity loss and ecosystem degradation, further exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic, reached across the United Nations system's pillars – from sustainable development to peace and security to human rights – and remained absolute priorities for the United Nations system.

65. The Chair recalled the Board's endorsement of a stronger focus on nature across the United Nations system, including a deeper understanding of the United Nations system footprint on nature and actions that could be taken to regulate that footprint, irrespective of mandates. The Board had tasked the Committee with developing a common approach to integrating biodiversity and nature-based solutions for sustainable development into the policy and programme planning and delivery of the United Nations.

66. In response to the Board's request, as the lead entity, UNEP developed a discussion note, providing a suggested approach to delivering on the request from CEB. A time-bound Committee Task Team on Biodiversity, co-led by UNEP and UNDP was set up, with 20 members contributing to the elaboration of the discussion note before the Committee.

67. A representative of UNEP, Corli Pretorius, introduced the proposed building blocks for such a common approach, underscoring that the current COVID-19 pandemic had shown that environmental disruptions could create a global health crisis, wreak havoc with societies and economies, and could no longer be ignored. Responses to climate and biodiversity crises needed to be connected in policy and practice, including through the decade of action for the Sustainable Development Goals. Multilateral environmental agreements encouraged international cooperation and governance of global challenges and were underpinned by inclusive action, gender equality and human rights. Through collective action, the United Nations system could leverage its convening power and expertise in support of the 2050 vision of living in harmony with nature.

68. The common approach would be designed to enable CEB members to pursue opportunities for collective and cohesive action and joint delivery of initiatives at the global, regional and country levels that connected the strategies and programmes of work of United Nations system entities. The draft identified three impact areas: (a) peaceful societies and planetary stability; (b) a green and inclusive recovery; and (c) strengthened institutions, accountability and justice.

69. The ensuing discussion provided the space for refining the rationale of the common approach and identifying opportunities to integrate ongoing processes and committing to common actions. The Committee welcomed the discussion note and expressed its support for, and commitment to, engaging further in the work of the task team for the development of a common approach.

70. Members recognized the importance of anchoring the common approach in the 2030 Agenda, in particular from its multidimensional perspective, and leveraging existing mechanisms and processes, as it would also serve as a catalyst for implementation of commitments on biodiversity and nature-based solutions stemming from the multilateral environmental agreements, the Paris Agreement and the United Nations strategic plan for forests 2017–2030, among others.

71. Some of the elements requiring further attention by the task team included a closer link among the proposed three impact areas and capacity-building at the national and local levels. Members suggested strengthening the section by focusing on the root causes of biodiversity loss and ecosystem degradation, noting that the final document would need to articulate the competing demands of food security, food systems, poverty, ecosystem conservation, unsustainable production and consumption patterns and economic development.

72. Additional elements raised by the Committee included the role of the humanitarian response and disaster risk reduction and elaborating on the role of education, culture, science and indigenous knowledge, given that they could further support conservation, including leveraging biosphere reserves as a model for

revaluing nature. The role of space, drones, aircraft and technology in monitoring, mitigating and adapting to climate change and sharing data, in particular on local issues, was mentioned as an important tool for biodiversity conservation. In addition, emerging technologies were deemed enablers of sustainable energy solutions while mitigating impacts on nature. Conservation-related approaches to create green jobs and as a conduit for promoting sustainable production and consumption patterns were also mentioned.

73. Committee members referred to strengthening the link to Sustainable Development Goals indicators and targets, in particular those underpinned by biodiversity and expiring in 2020. Examples of strengthening nature-based safety net approaches, such as the bolsa verde programme in Brazil and the Great Green Wall initiative in the Sahel, were suggested to widen the system-wide narrative on biodiversity and align it with the priorities of the Secretary-General: nature-based solutions to be embedded in nationally determined contributions and COVID-19 recovery plans; economic systems and financial market accounting for nature; and ambitious targets that could support biodiversity, protect human rights and leave no one behind.

74. Other suggestions conveyed by members included the need to ensure that an effective science-policy interface was built into United Nations programming on biodiversity at all levels; strengthen gender considerations; enhance references to the role of agroecology; advance the environmental rule of law and strengthen criminal justice response to crimes that had an impact on the environment; increase attention to linkages with food systems and, by extension, the United Nations Food Systems Summit process; and consider amplifying the role of private sector engagement.

75. Reflecting on the rich discussion and positive feedback received, the representative of UNEP welcomed the comments and underscored that a flexible approach would allow the United Nations system to come together and address issues in a systemic way and that the common approach would prepare the system to be proactive with regard to the socioeconomic transitions that were needed to live in harmony with nature.

76. In summarizing the discussion, the Chair welcomed the task team's efforts towards developing a common approach to integrating biodiversity and nature-based solutions for sustainable development into the policy and programme planning and delivery of the United Nations. He noted the Committee's strong support for the work of the task team and invited the co-chairs to consider the guidance received by the Committee in further elaboration of the common approach.

Conclusion

77. **The Committee welcomed the efforts of the Committee's Task Team on Biodiversity and requested it to take the Committee's contributions into consideration in further elaborating the draft United Nations system common approach to integrating biodiversity and nature-based solutions for sustainable development into United Nations policy and programme planning and delivery, to be considered by the Committee at its forty-first session.**

VIII. Summary of information items

78. Further to their electronic reviews and endorsements in advance of the session, the Committee members took note of the progress report on the ongoing effort to mainstream the Istanbul Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2011–2020 into the work programmes of organizations of the United

Nations system, submitted by the United Nations Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States. They also took note of the progress reports of UN-Water, UN-Energy and UN-Oceans.

79. The Director of the Office of Intergovernmental Support and Coordination for Sustainable Development drew the Committee's attention to the annex to the UN-Energy progress report, in which an overview of the planned High-level Dialogue on Energy, to be held at the summit level in September 2021, under the auspices of the General Assembly, was presented. She noted that the Dialogue would be a historic opportunity to provide transformational action on Goal 7 (ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all) in the first years of the decade of action for the Sustainable Development Goals and support the implementation of the Paris Agreement. The UN-Energy Co-Chairs would facilitate the substantive preparations, multi-stakeholder mobilization and inter-agency support, while UN-Energy would provide technical coordination leadership for identifying the tracks and facilitating technical working groups. The Director of the Office of Intergovernmental Support and Coordination for Sustainable Development said that she counted on the strong engagement of the members of UN-Energy and all United Nations system organizations in the technical working groups and other preparatory processes, as well as the engagement of Executive Heads in the Dialogue itself, which was expected to produce a forward-looking statement in which concrete actions were called for to accelerate the implementation of Goal 7 to advance sustainable development and climate action.

IX. Other matters

A. Dates and location of the forty-first session of the Committee

80. The Chair proposed the dates of 29 and 30 March 2021 for the forty-first session of the Committee. The decision to hold a physical or a virtual meeting would be taken in the coming months on the basis of an evolution of the COVID-19 pandemic, with utmost consideration for the health and well-being of Committee members.

Conclusion

81. **The Committee approved the dates of its forty-first session, 29 and 30 March 2021, with the format, location and host to be determined.**

B. Any other business

82. Before closing the meeting, the Chair noted that the scoping discussion on the future of work of the Committee, which had been postponed from the thirty-ninth session, was expected to proceed at the forty-first session. As in previous scoping discussions, it would present an opportunity to examine "pipeline" issues that merited the Committee's attention and to reflect on the Committee's working methods to ensure that the Committee's work benefited the United Nations system. The Chair requested the Secretary of the Committee to begin preparations for the discussion, including seeking input from Committee members to inform an orientation paper that would serve as the background document.

83. The Chair called attention to the request of the General Assembly, in its resolution 75/1 on the declaration on the commemoration of the seventy-fifth anniversary of the United Nations, that the Secretary-General report back with recommendations to advance the common agenda and to respond to current and future

challenges, indicating that that effort was likely to influence the Committee's work in the near future. The Secretary-General would be dedicating the CEB session of November 2020 to a reflection on a response to that request. The Committee would be ready to contribute to any follow-up, as requested by the Board.

84. Lastly, the Chair paid tribute to two staff members departing from the CEB secretariat, Cansin Karakus and Luisa Karst, thanking them for their service in support of the Committee and wishing them success in their new roles.

Annex I

Agenda

1. Artificial intelligence:
   (a) United Nations system-wide action on the ethics of artificial intelligence;
   (b) Follow-up to the United Nations system-wide strategic approach and road map for supporting capacity development on artificial intelligence.
2. Progress report on the Committee's pilot predictive analytics exercise.
3. Progress report on the activities of the informal Committee's foresight network.
4. Progress report on the activities of the Committee's Task Team on Inequalities.
5. Building an inclusive, sustainable and resilient future with indigenous peoples: draft call to action of the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination.
6. Biodiversity and nature-based solutions for sustainable development.
7. Summary of information items.
8. Other matters:
   (a) Dates and location of the forty-first session of the Committee;
   (b) Any other business.

Annex II

List of participants

Chair: Guy Ryder (International Labour Organization)

Secretary: Maaike Jansen (secretariat of the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination)

United Nations

Executive Office of the Secretary-General	Michelle Gyles-McDonnough Ayaka Suzuki Julie Morizet
Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs	Teresa Whitfield Martin Waehlisch Ilona Lecerf
Peacebuilding Support Office	Henk-Jan Brinkman
UN75	Danit Gal Yu Ping Chan
Department of Economic and Social Affairs	Marion Barthelemy Xenia von Lilien
Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs	Hansjoerg Strohmeyer Murad Jeridi
Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights	Craig Mokhiber Benjamin Schachter Sally-Anne Way
Global Pulse	Robert Kirkpatrick Mila Romanoff Josiane Toundzi
Regional Economic Communities	Amr Nour Yera Ortiz De Urbina
United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change	Daniele Violetti Yousef Nassef
United Nations System Staff College	Jafar Javan
Office for Outer Space Affairs	Simonetta Di Pippo Markus Woltran
Joint District Coordination Office	Rosemary Kalapurakal
International Labour Organization	Sukti Dasgupta Margaret Mottaz-Shilliday Irmgard Nubler
Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations	Beth Crawford Dejan Jakovljevic Irene Hoffman
United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization	Gabriela Ramos Shamila Nair-Bedouelle Eliot Minchenberg Clare Stark

International Civil Aviation Organization	Erwin Lassooij Jane Hupe
World Health Organization	Werner H. Obermeyer Nata Menabde Joana Vogel
World Bank Group	Laura Jaitman
International Monetary Fund	Robert Powell
Universal Postal Union	Abdellatif Meskine
International Telecommunication Union	Ursula Wynhoven Preetam Maloor Haidar Baqir
World Meteorological Organization	Paul Egerton Laura Paterson
International Maritime Organization	Azara al-Hassam Prempeh Beatriz Good Gyorgyi Gurban
World Intellectual Property Organization	Ola Zahran
International Fund for Agricultural Development	Marie Haga Shantanu Mathur
United Nations Industrial Development Organization	Ayumi Fujino Tsung-Ping Chung
International Atomic Energy Agency	Camila Polo Florez Vivian Okeke
World Tourism Organization	Zoritsa Urosevic Samiti Siv
World Trade Organization	Said El Hachimi
International Organization for Migration	Ashraf El Nour Kieran Gorman-Best Amira Nassim
United Nations Conference on Trade and Development	Paul Akiwumi
United Nations Development Programme	Haoliang Xu Tariq Malik Tim Scott
United Nations Environment Programme	Mara Murillo Corli Pretorius
Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees	Raouf Mazou Annika Sandlund Andrew James Harper
United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East	Sam Rose
United Nations Children’s Fund	Vidhya Ganesh David Matern

World Food Programme	Valerie Guarnieri David Kaatrud
United Nations Population Fund	Diene Keita Alexander Pak Emilie Filmer-Wilson
United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime	Jean-Luc Lemahieu Bo Mathiasen
United Nations Human Settlements Programme	Christopher Williams
United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women	Aparna Mehrotra Sharon Taylor Adam Simpson
United Nations University	David Passarelli
Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS	Shannon Hader Nertila Tavanxhi
Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization	Patrick Grenard
International Trade Centre	Riefqah Jappie Ana Patricia Batalhone
Young UN	Marc Liberati Michaela Markova
Secretariat of the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination	Simona Petrova Remo Lalli Federica Pietracci Cheryl Stafford Luisa Karst Cansin Karakus Marije van den Berg Marta Lorenzo Fernandez

Annex III

Building an inclusive, sustainable and resilient future with indigenous peoples: a call to action

1. The rights of indigenous peoples have been given progressively more attention by the United Nations system, from the establishment of the Working Group on Indigenous Populations in 1982 to the Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention, 1989 (No. 169), of the International Labour Organization (ILO) to the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples of 2007, as well as the outcome document of the World Conference on Indigenous Peoples of 2014. The system-wide action plan for ensuring a coherent approach to achieving the ends of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (E/C.19/2016/5) was developed in 2015 to provide a framework to measure the support and progress of United Nations work to advance the rights and well-being of the world's over 476 million indigenous persons.[1]

2. However, the implementation of these international legal instruments and United Nations frameworks has been uneven. Indigenous peoples, particularly indigenous children, youth, girls and women, elders, persons with disabilities, migrants and refugees, continue to face widespread discrimination and marginalization, which has been further magnified by the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic. The fifth anniversary of the system-wide action plan on the rights of indigenous peoples provides an opportunity for revitalizing the plan and strengthening collective and coherent United Nations system action. The upcoming International Decade of Indigenous Languages, which the period 2022–2032 has been proclaimed, provides an opportunity to draw attention to the critical loss of indigenous languages and the urgent need to preserve, revitalize and promote them.[2]

3. While representing over 6.2 per cent of the world's population, indigenous peoples are nearly three times as likely to be living in extreme poverty than non-indigenous peoples. They account for almost 19 per cent of the extreme poor.[3] Indigenous peoples have been particularly hard hit by the COVID-19 pandemic and its consequences[4] and are often at higher risk from emerging infectious diseases.

4. Furthermore, a lack of legal recognition and of disaggregated data have contributed to the invisibility of indigenous peoples and further compounded the discrimination that they face. The situation calls for reinvigorated efforts towards addressing the negative legacy of historical injustices, discrimination and assimilation that indigenous peoples have been subjected to over centuries.

5. Indigenous women and girls face additional forms of discrimination and vulnerability. They are three times more likely to experience sexual violence compared with non-indigenous women and are particularly affected by large-scale land-grabbing and dispossession because of their unequal access to and control over land, territories and natural resources, coupled with their limited mobility, access to justice and decision-making power in the household and the community (E/CN.6/2020/3, para. 278). The negative impact of the COVID-19 pandemic has further exacerbated these existing vulnerabilities.

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[1] International Labour Organization (ILO), *Implementing the ILO Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention No. 169: Towards an inclusive, sustainable and just future* (Geneva, 2019), p. 13.

[2] See General Assembly resolution 74/135, paras. 24 and 25.

[3] *Implementing the ILO Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention No. 169*, p. 20.

[4] Inter-Agency Support Group on Indigenous Peoples' Issues, "Indigenous Peoples and COVID-19: A Guidance Note for the UN System", available at www.un.org/development/desa/indigenouspeoples/covid-19.html.

6. Respect for indigenous peoples' rights must go hand in hand with their meaningful participation, inclusion and empowerment to make informed decisions, as full and equal members of society. Indigenous peoples are indispensable partners and contributors to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. Their understanding of nature's cycles, livelihoods and indigenous food systems, as well as their holistic world view and traditional knowledge, passed down intergenerationally, contributes to the protection of biodiversity and the fight against climate change – essential elements for a successful and long-term COVID-19 recovery process. The traditional lands and territories of indigenous peoples are the most biologically diverse, and essential for a culturally and linguistically diverse planet.

7. The response of indigenous peoples to the global pandemic, and their leadership in preventing the spread of COVID-19 in their communities, has further shown their resilience in the face of adversity.

8. A sustainable COVID-19 response and recovery needs to address the realities and threats faced by indigenous peoples and must consider their inalienable rights. Indigenous peoples may face increased persecution, intimidation and harassment while governments try to rebuild their economies.

9. Response and recovery efforts also need to consider how indigenous peoples, particularly indigenous women and girls, are disproportionally affected by poverty and a lack of access to social protection and how indigenous children and youth experience much higher rates of suicide and self-harm compared with non-indigenous peoples. Public policies and social protection packages designed to reactivate the economy should include indigenous peoples as beneficiaries and incorporate their perspectives and rights into devising and implementing the type of assistance needed.

10. Conflicts involving indigenous peoples over land, territories and resources have become frequent. Attacks on defenders of the human rights of indigenous peoples for defending their collective rights to lands, territories and resources, which include indigenous environmental human rights defenders, have increased dramatically in recent years. The continued conflicts and human rights violations related to their lands often also result in the displacement and dispossession of indigenous peoples and, in some instances, a heightened risk of statelessness, particularly for those indigenous peoples whose traditional lands cross national borders.

11. Under the leadership of the Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs, and in response to a request by the General Assembly, the system-wide action plan on the rights of indigenous peoples was developed by the Inter-Agency Support Group on Indigenous Peoples' Issues, with the aim of increasing United Nations system coherence in addressing the rights and well-being of indigenous peoples in its work, including in support of Member States. The plan includes specific practical and realistic action points across six action areas. In November 2015, the action plan was brought to the attention of the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination (CEB), and members were encouraged to support its implementation in their respective organizations and to make concerted efforts to raise awareness of indigenous peoples' issues (CEB/2015/2, para. 58).

12. The 2020 call to action of the Secretary-General for human rights[5] and the decade of action and delivery for sustainable development are critical opportunities to make progress with indigenous peoples towards the achievement of the Goals, as well as the rights enshrined in the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. Furthermore, United Nations programming should be informed

[5] "The highest aspiration: a call to action for human rights", remarks to the Human Rights Council, Geneva, 24 February 2020. Available at https://reliefweb.int/report/world/highest-aspiration-call-action-human-rights-2020.

by the recommendations and reports of dedicated United Nations indigenous peoples' mechanisms, United Nations treaty bodies, the Universal Periodic Review and Special Procedures of the Human Rights Council and the ILO supervisory bodies.

13. Following the meeting of the United Nations Executive Committee of 13 August 2020, the Secretary-General made a series of decisions related to indigenous peoples that included enhanced support for resident coordinators and United Nations country teams in their engagement with indigenous peoples; the development of an awareness-raising campaign regarding the rights of indigenous peoples; and ensuring that indigenous peoples would be included in decision-making that affected them, including with regard to COVID-19 response and recovery. The decisions included the intent to strengthen the collective United Nations system-wide policy response to support indigenous peoples through the High-level Committee on Programmes and the CEB effort to issue the call to action on building an inclusive, sustainable and resilient future with indigenous peoples (decision 2020/57, 1 (d) of the Executive Committee).

From commitment to action

14. Today, as CEB members, we affirm our commitment to supporting Member States in the promotion, protection and realization of the rights of indigenous peoples. To this end, building on the call to action for human rights and within the context of the decade of action and delivery for sustainable development, we will redouble our efforts towards realizing the system-wide action plan on the rights of indigenous peoples as a means of ensuring collaborative and coherent United Nations system action to support the rights and well-being of indigenous peoples.

15. With a view to supporting and strengthening our collective efforts while recognizing the respective mandates of CEB member organizations, we, the members of CEB:

(a) Request the Inter-Agency Support Group on Indigenous Peoples' Issues, with the participation of indigenous peoples, to collect and analyse lessons learned and good practices on United Nations actions in support of the realization of the rights of indigenous peoples, and make recommendations for Committee's consideration of:

(i) How to step up efforts to work collaboratively to strengthen coherence, consistency and the impact of the United Nations system work in support of these rights as envisaged in the system-wide action plan on the rights of indigenous peoples;

(ii) Measurable indicators for each of the six actions of the action plan to ensure effective reporting and accountability;

(iii) Options for how the United Nations system can strengthen international cooperation to increase technical and financial assistance to support the realization of indigenous peoples' rights and develop or strengthen existing culturally appropriate programmes to support indigenous peoples' socioeconomic development in accordance with their own rights and priorities;

(iv) Options for how the United Nations system can support the protection of indigenous human rights defenders, which include indigenous environmental human rights defenders, including through efforts to improve access to information, strengthen preventive actions, ensure remedies for violations and enhance the United Nations system's support for national efforts to address conflicts involving indigenous peoples by leveraging specialized prevention and mediation mechanisms;

(b) Request the Committee to bring the lessons learned and good practices and proposals to strengthen the implementation of the action plan to the attention of CEB, and relay to the United Nations Sustainable Development Group and other inter-agency mechanisms, as appropriate;

(c) Recommit our organizations to providing support, as relevant, to resident coordinators and United Nations country teams, including through the Inter-Agency Support Group on Indigenous Peoples' Issues, to intensify efforts to implement the action plan, with particular efforts to ensure the more systematic participation of indigenous peoples in United Nations country processes, such as the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Frameworks, and to support Member States in establishing institutions and mechanisms for the consultation of indigenous peoples, as well as ensuring the effective participation of indigenous youth and indigenous women, including in the follow-up to and review of COVID-19 socioeconomic response and recovery plans and the Sustainable Development Goals, and looking to the United Nations Sustainable Development Group to support these efforts;

(d) Recognizing the need for the United Nations system to invest in supporting countries to improve the disaggregation of data on indigenous peoples, including on COVID-19 response, call upon the Committee of the Chief Statisticians of the United Nations System to consider indigenous identity and ethnicity in its efforts to improve data and statistics to support United Nations principles and programmes in the context of the System-wide Road Map for Innovating United Nations Data and Statistics and the principle of leaving no one behind (2.2.4);

(e) Commit our organizations to ensuring the more systematic participation of indigenous peoples in United Nations processes, United Nations decades and technical committees, as well as major United Nations international meetings, conferences and summits, including the United Nations Food Systems Summit of 2021,[6] the United Nations Oceans Conference,[7] the climate change process[8] and the special session of the General Assembly on COVID-19, bearing in mind the practices of the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development.

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[6] 2021 Food Systems Summit. See www.un.org/en/food-systems-summit.

[7] United Nations Oceans Conference, to be held in Lisbon, date forthcoming. See www.un.org/en/conferences/ocean2020.

[8] The twenty-sixth session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change will be held in Glasgow, Scotland, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, from 1–12 November 2021.