



DIALOGUE OF THE EXECUTIVE SECRETARIES OF THE REGIONAL COMMISSIONS WITH THE SECOND COMMITTEE OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY

“From risk to resilience: Accelerating actions to achieve a more sustainable and equitable future through regional cooperation”

**77TH session of the UN General Assembly
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I. BACKGROUND

Across regions, economies severely affected by the COVID-19 pandemic are now confronting a cascade of other crises – from soaring food and energy prices, to spiraling inflation, crushing debt burdens, shrinking fiscal space and conflict. Recent findings of the International Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) once again highlighted that the goal of limiting warming to 1.5 degrees is still on life support. The risks, from climate change to disasters and diseases, are expected to be more intense, unpredictable, and more likely to converge. As overlaying risks define our present and future, vulnerable countries and people who contribute the least to global warming, continue to bear the brunt. Developing countries and SIDS in particular are simultaneously facing the fury of climate change and a cost-of-living crisis, further eroding the path towards a sustainable, resilient, and inclusive future and the advancement of the SDGs.

Snapshots of regional trends

UNECE region

The war in Ukraine has derailed the recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic and fueled further pre-existing inflationary pressures, which are eroding real incomes and driving widening inequality, given the disproportionate impact of food and energy prices increases on low-income groups. Support to households and business to offset high energy costs has led to increased fiscal outlays. While inflation remains widespread, economic performance in some countries has been better than expected, as temporary factors, in some, and high hydrocarbon prices, in others, have supported growth, which nevertheless remain fragile. The outlook remains negative in a context of tightening financing conditions and high level of geopolitical uncertainty. The region’s already uncertain path to achieving the SDGs by 2030 is now further in question. In addition, the effects of climate change are increasingly felt in the region. At the same time, the crisis has put the region’s energy system’s resilience to test, while also slowing down the transition to greener and lower carbon energy sources. Finally, the crisis has exacerbated the pre-existing connectivity bottlenecks, especially in Central Asia and the Caucasus, creating both challenges and opportunities for the economies of the region.



Latin America and the Caribbean

Facing the compounded effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, and the impacts of the war in Ukraine the economies of Latin America and the Caribbean will return to the low-growth path observed prior to the pandemic. ECLAC estimates that the region will grow 2.7% in 2022 and 16 countries will not recover their pre-pandemic GDP levels. In the context of rising inflationary pressures, poverty is also on the rise. ECLAC expects poverty levels to reach 33.7% and extreme poverty 14.9% in 2022. Gender gaps in employment and the feminization of poverty remain considerable challenges. GHG emissions are also on the rise, now representing 10% of global emissions and the region is highly vulnerable to the impacts of climate change. Higher interest rates, currency depreciation and higher levels of sovereign risk, in a context of high indebtedness, represent a major challenge for managing liabilities and access to financing. In this context, regional and global cooperation emerge as priority areas of discussion for the sustainable development of the region

Asia and the Pacific

The Asia Pacific region is facing the cascading and converging risks of disease, disasters, and climate change. These triple threats are taking a high toll for people and cost economies in over \$780 billion a year. The new risk landscape or “riskscape” is defining the development trajectory and choices of many countries as they are lurching from crisis to crisis with little political or financial space for long term investments needed to deliver resilient, inclusive and sustainable development. For countries to spend their way out of crisis will require reducing pre-existing vulnerabilities and building the capacity to better deal with economic and non-economic shocks. This includes investing in an urgent energy transition to help shield countries from unpredictable and volatile fossil fuel markets; investing in social protection and universal healthcare that has proven to be the first line of defense in times of crisis and; investing in disaster risk reduction and resilience; and locking in the benefits of digital transformation and innovation jumpstarted by the pandemic.

Arab region

The Arab region continues to suffer as a result of the simultaneous crises of climate, food security and cost of living, and the impacts of the pandemic and the war in Ukraine. This is in addition to ongoing conflict and refugee crisis. As regards climate change, the region contributes less than 5 per cent to global greenhouse gas emissions but is one of the most vulnerable to the potential ravages of climate change. Droughts, heat waves, forest fires, sand and dust storms, sea level rise and flash floods are impacting health, homes, livelihoods and nature. Further, Arab economies are likely to lose \$11 billion in 2022 and \$16.9 billion in 2023. Arab middle-income countries would lose 2.3% of their expected GDP in 2022, while Arab least developed countries would suffer a loss of 0.6%. Only energy-exporting countries will see an increase in GDP of about 0.7% due to increased demand for and rising prices of energy. Fiscal deficits are likely to increase in the range of 2 to 6 percentage points across oil-importing low- and middle-income countries.



Grain and oil supply to the region has decreased significantly due supply-chain disruptions and sanctions, causing rises in the prices of food and essential staples. The poverty rate in the 15 non-GCC countries is likely to reach 32 percent. An additional 4 million people will be pushed into poverty, to a record 126 million people in the region. Extreme poverty is likely to extend to an additional 2.8 million people in the region as a result.

At least 7 countries are experiencing conflict and an estimated 16 million people in the region are considered either refugees or IDPs, while close to 52 million are in need of humanitarian assistance. The Russia-Ukraine war is also jeopardizing delivery of aid, putting millions of refugees and displaced persons in the region at risk of hunger.

Africa

Africa's improved growth prospects for 2022 are being jeopardized by the ongoing Russia/Ukraine conflict and the impacts of COVID 19. Food, fertilizer and energy prices, coupled with cost of financing have spiraled. Import bills for key products have doubled for many countries and interest rate hikes are driving up borrowing costs. Inflation is set to reach 14% in 2022. The ECA Economic Report on Africa (2021) noted that the Covid-19 pandemic led to an additional 55 million people being pushed into extreme poverty in 2020, loss of 22 million jobs in 2021 and cost countries up to US\$ 2.2 billion in fiscal stimulus in 2020. With the current conflict, over 124 million people face food insecurity, more than 20 African countries are at high risk of or in debt-distress and ECA estimates the war could further reduce Africa's fiscal space by 7% of GDP. These challenges are compounded by severe climate vulnerabilities that will lead to an estimated loss of 5% of GDP by 2030.

Notwithstanding, and in spite of the multiple crises, endogenous growth opportunities exist to create jobs and build resilience. The African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) remains a major growth catalyst for increased intra-regional trade. The creation of the African Medical Supplies Platform ensured that African countries had access to vaccines and Covid-19 medical supplies. The conservation of the Congo Basin and establishment of a carbon credit market can generate up to US\$50 billion in revenues annually. Leveraging the vast amount of cobalt in DRC to produce precursor materials for batteries can see Africa benefit significantly from a US\$ 7 trillion electric vehicle market as of current estimates. ECA continues to support member-states in promoting economic transformation in all the above areas. In addition, restoring growth, building resilience and increasing wealth is dependent on the recognition of Africa's role within the global economic order., ECA is working to improve global safety nets and equalize the access to and treatment of African economies by the Global Financial Architecture.

Although resources for recovery are already under strain, we must not only restore what was lost but set forth new pathways for development to achieve a more sustainable, resilient and equitable future. In this context, equitable access to vaccine supply, expansive stimulus packages in key sectors, such as resilience and preparedness, improved energy security, health, education, transport and trade connectivity, infrastructure and decent jobs, food systems, renewable energy, digital services, and access to financing for sustainable development, have become an urgent need. In line with the theme of the Second Committee



general debate, it is time to go beyond statements to concrete action and viable initiatives, with clear pathways to investments and to the policy changes required to set countries back on track to achieve the SDGs and restore trust on multilateral cooperation.

Against this backdrop, the Regional Commissions continue to support member States in addressing this complex configuration of threats with the development of national and regional solutions and innovative policy approaches, providing spaces for cross-sectoral and inclusive policy dialogue and peer learning, and delivering operational support and advisory services.

II. OBJECTIVES

Building on the theme of the general debate of the Second Committee, “Transforming political commitments into actions for sustainable recovery - Rebuilding a Sustainable Future for All”, the Dialogue will focus on the theme of “***From risk to resilience: Accelerating actions to achieve a more sustainable and equitable future through regional cooperation***” and will allow debate on regional perspectives and solution pathways.

Key objectives of the Dialogue will be to:

1. share latest data, insights and regional perspectives on the state of progress on the pandemic recovery and the combined impact of the food, energy and financing crises in the regions;
2. raise awareness on innovative thinking, policy responses and partnerships to build forward more resilient, inclusive and sustainable societies and to transform economies to reverse underinvestment in social protection systems and accelerate achievement of the SDGs;
3. reflect and exchange views on opportunities and implications of emerging trends solutions in financing for development, approaches to ensure financial liquidity to power the recovery and the required transformations to achieve the SDGs, including the reform of the international financial architecture and climate finance;
4. showcase how the Regional Commissions, building on their convening and advocacy power, normative capacity and the knowledge of the countries they serve, are supporting countries in addressing the multiplicity of crises and building resilient economic systems and societies,
5. demonstrate how regional cooperation and partnerships complement national efforts in fostering an inclusive, sustainable, and resilient recovery and act as building block of global cooperation.

III. FORMAT

The Chair of the General Assembly Second Committee, H.E. Ms. Lachezara Stoeva, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Bulgaria to the UN, will deliver opening remarks. The Executive Secretaries and Acting Executive Secretary of the five UN Regional Commissions will make presentations (10 mins each). Interactive rounds of discussion with members of the Committee will follow. The Director of the Regional Commissions New York Office will moderate the discussion.



IV. PROGRAMME

10:00 Opening remarks, Chair Second Committee, H.E. Ms. Lachezara Stoeva, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Bulgaria to the UN.

Welcoming remarks, Moderator, Ms. Rosa Malango, Director, Regional Commissions New York Office.

10:05 Presentations by the Executive Secretaries of the Regional Commissions:

- Executive Secretary ESCAP and USG Ms. Armida Salsiah Alisjahbana (via VTC)
- Executive Secretary ESCWA and USG Ms. Rola Dashti;
- Acting Executive Secretary ECA Mr. Antonio Pedro;
- Deputy Executive Secretary for Management and Programme Analysis, ECLAC, Mr. Raul Garcia-Buchaca (via VTC);
- Executive Secretary UNECE and USG Ms. Olga Algayerova (Coordinator of the five Regional Commissions).

10:55 Round of interventions from the floor.

12:00 Responses from the Executive Secretaries of the Regional Commissions.

12:50 Concluding remarks by the Moderator.

12:55 Closing remarks by the Chair.

V. FOCUS AREAS

Against the background outlined above, the following questions are suggested to frame the Dialogue:

- What is your perspective on how the multiple crises are unfolding in your respective regions (including impacts of the pandemic, climate change, conflict, as well as the food, energy and finance crises)? ?
- What steps/ actions are the Regional Commissions taking to support regional cooperation among member States and address the impacts of the cumulative crises? What opportunities are there for joint advocacy? What actions are needed from the international community?
- As we initiate preparations for the 2023 SDG Summit and discuss how to operationalize the Common Agenda as an agenda for action to accelerate the implementation of the SDGs, how can action at the regional level contribute to reinvigorating the multilateral response? What opportunities exist for rethinking measurements of development needs and for renewed forms of cooperation between developed and developing countries?
- How are the Regional Commissions working with the UN system at the regional and country level in responding to the multiple crises?



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VI. DOCUMENTATION

An overview of recent work and publications of the Regional Commissions on the theme of the Dialogue will be shared in advance.