



CONCEPT NOTE

2020-21 Executive Training Course for Policymakers on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

22-26 March 2021

Introduction

The United Nations Office for Sustainable Development (UNOSD) was established in 2011 in Incheon City, Republic of Korea by United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA) with the support from the Government of Korea. The UNOSD, which is part of the UN DESA Division for Sustainable Development Goals (DSDG), contributes to building, exchanging and facilitating the use of knowledge in support of sustainable development. The Office specialises in mapping, assessing and improving the exchange of knowledge resources, providing advice to Member States and the broader policy communities on applying such resources, and conducting research and capacity development in different areas related to sustainable development with the goal of accelerating progress towards Agenda 2030 and the Sustainable Development Goals.

One of UNOSD's flagship activities is the annual *Executive Training Course for Policymakers on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*. The Executive Training Course for Policymakers on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is intended to provide policymakers in central and subnational governments with the knowledge, skills and tools for implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) at all levels of society.

Included in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development that was adopted by UN Member States in September 2015, are the 17 SDGs and their 169 associated targets, conceived as "*integrated and indivisible, global in nature and universally applicable, taking into account different national realities, capacities and levels of development and respecting national policies and priorities*". The 2019 Global Sustainable Development Report notes that the biggest transformative potentials of the 2030 Agenda do not lie in pursuing single Goals or targets but rather in a systemic approach (GSDR, 2019). Considering the integrated and indivisible nature of the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs, the Executive Training Course for Policymakers aims to support UN Member States in applying systems-thinking to implement the 2030 Agenda and the 17 SDGs.

As part of its follow-up and review mechanisms, the 2030 Agenda encourages Member States to "conduct regular and inclusive reviews of progress at the national and sub-national levels, which are country-led and country-driven" (paragraph 79). As stipulated in paragraph 84 of the 2030 Agenda, regular reviews by the High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF) are to be voluntary, state-led, undertaken by both developed and developing countries, and shall provide a platform for partnerships, including through the participation of major groups and other relevant stakeholders. Given their central role in overseeing the follow-up and review of the SDGs at the global level, their overarching themes and in-depth reviews of selected Goals at national level through the Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs) and, more recently, the Voluntary Local Reviews (VLRs), the HLPF meetings generally serve as a useful backdrop to the organization of the one-week training course.

This approach proved to be fruitful as country feedback gathered through recent surveys carried out among participants of past UNOSD activities confirmed that past editions of the Executive Training Course have successfully helped build Member States' capacity to both implement the 2030 Agenda and share progress on their SDG achievements through their VNRs and, to some extent, the VLRs.

Hence, the sixth session of the Executive Training Course planned to take place in May 2020 was to focus on the theme of the 2020 High-Level Political Forum for Sustainable Development, namely "*Accelerated action and transformative pathways: realizing the decade of action and delivery for sustainable development*." It was

also meant to integrate the UN Secretary-General's SDG Summit held in September 2019, which marked the first four-year review of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, where heads of state adopted a Political Declaration to accelerate progress on the Goals in the remaining decade. The Political Declaration "*Gearing up for a decade of action and delivery for sustainable development: political declaration of the Sustainable Development Goals Summit*" (A/RES/74/4) highlights ten accelerators for the coming decade and echoes "the potential of a systemic and holistic approach, taking into account interlinkages between Goals and targets."¹ Member States have agreed to these accelerators, which include primary focus on central principles of the 2030 Agenda, such as Leaving No One Behind. The Political Declaration commits Member States and the UN system to enhancing national implementation, investing in data for the SDGs, and strengthening institutions for more integrated solutions to ensure policy coherence for the SDGs among other accelerators for the Decade of Action.

The Executive Training Course for Policymakers on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development regularly takes place in May in Incheon City, where it gathers around 70 participants every year. However, the flagship capacity-building activity of the UNOSD could not take place in Incheon in May 2020 as initially planned due to the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. Not only had it to be postponed, but given the travel and in-person meeting limitations currently in place with the on-going COVID-19 pandemic, the Executive Training Course for Policymakers will thus take place in the form of a series of two-and-a-half-hour online sessions over five days between the **22 and 26 March 2021 (8:00pm - 10:30pm, Korea Standard Time)**.

Its focus has been slightly realigned to examine the impacts of the current COVID-19 pandemic crisis and identify potential solutions to support a swift recovery from the pandemic and advance the delivery of the Sustainable Development Goals in the Decade of Action. The international training course targeting senior government officials from developing countries to strengthen policy coherence for sustainable development integrating the social, economic, environmental and governance dimensions of policy making and implementation will be structured around the 2021 HLPF that will be held from 6 to 15 July 2021.

Guided by the overarching theme of the 2021 HLPF, that is, "*Sustainable and resilient recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic that promotes the economic, social and environmental dimensions of sustainable development: building an inclusive and effective path for the achievement of the 2030 Agenda in the context of the decade of action and delivery for sustainable development*", the 2020-21 Executive Training Course for Policymakers will also explore a set of 5 themes selected from the SDGs that will go under in-depth review during the 2021 HLPF: Goals 1 on no poverty, 2 on zero hunger, 3 on good health and well-being, 8 on decent work and economic growth, 12 on responsible consumption and production, 16 on peace, justice and strong institutions, and 17 on partnerships.²

Objectives

The Executive Training Course has as its general objective to build the knowledge, skills, mindsets, and general capacities of Member States for implementing sustainable development planning, policy making and policy shaping through an integrated approach. This year, the 2020-21 Executive Training Course for Policymakers on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development will focus on the SDG 3 on good health and well-being, SDG 8 on decent work and economic growth, SDG 12 on responsible consumption and production, SDG 16 on peace, justice and strong institutions, and SDG 17 on partnerships in the context of the current challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic and will seek to identify potential solutions to support a swift recovery from the pandemic and accelerate the delivery of the SDGs in this Decade of Action.

Structure

The 2020-21 Executive Training Course's five online modules are structured around ensuring accelerated actions for the Decade of Action, in line with the Political Declaration of the SDG Summit "Gearing up for a decade of action and delivery for sustainable development" and the theme of the 2021 High-Level Political Forum. The structure of the modules aims to equip participants with practical yet transformative pathways, including planning, policy and public programme design for sustainable development. The modules will also emphasize the importance of equipping participants with skills to craft nationally and locally owned policies

¹ <https://undocs.org/en/A/RES/74/4>

² <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/hlpf/2021>

and strategies examining the interactions, co-benefits and trade-offs to create synergies in policymaking for the SDGs.

While each online module will be designed as a stand-alone training component, the first and last modules will make room for an introduction and conclusion of the whole training course. Following the opening ceremony, an introduction of the 5-day training course will be made with reference to the current COVID-19 pandemic crisis and the need to deliver the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs in the Decade of Action. It will then focus on SDGs 3, 8, 12, 16 and 17. The fifth online module will integrate a conclusion and a closing ceremony.

*Please note that UNOSD is planning to organize a special 3-to-5 day face-to-face meeting in Incheon, Republic of Korea, where a selection of participants who have registered and actively taken part in the 2020-21 Executive Training Course for Policymakers on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development will be invited (travel cost, including roundtrip airfare, terminal expenses and DSA as per existing UN rules and regulations) to take part and share their learning and experience with peers from all over the world, when the situation allows.