

Principals-level meeting of the Inter-agency Task Force on Financing for Development

Monday, 27 September 2021, 9:00 to 10:30 a.m. EDT, Virtual (MS Teams)

Opening remarks by Mr. Liu Zhenmin, Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs, Chair of the IATF

Distinguished colleagues,

It is my distinct pleasure to welcome you to this principal-level meeting of the Inter-agency Task Force on Financing for Development. I sincerely appreciate your presence during this extremely busy month, and especially given the difficulties that the pandemic is still causing for our work. And I would like to thank you for the collaboration and contributions you have made to this Task Force over the past 12 months. At this meeting, I would like to move forward the preparations and strengthen the coordination efforts for the 2022 Financing for Sustainable Development Report (FSDR).

As the COVID-19 pandemic is continuing to devastate livelihoods, the economic repercussions are being felt across the world. As we have seen at the General Assembly last week, there are some countries who are faring relatively well, with high rates of vaccination and the ability to mount extraordinary economic responses. Meanwhile other countries are left without vaccines, a deteriorating outlook for debt sustainability, and the inability to invest in the SDGs. Secretary General Guterres warned the world last week to wake up and work to bridge six great divides. Our joint work on financing solutions for sustainable development is central to addressing the inequality divide that he identified, but also to bridge all the other Great Divides and to save humanity and the planet.

Countries are looking to this Task Force to bring together the work on financing from around the international system, to offer policy solutions for both short-term challenges and to provide the foundations for implementing our global Common Agenda in the medium- and long-term.

Today, I would like to hear your thoughts on the 2022 edition of our joint publication, the FSDR, and especially on the approach to the thematic chapter.

The 2022 FSDR will review progress across all parts of the Addis Ababa Action Agenda, as mandated. We have already consulted on outlines for the chapters and my team will continue engaging with your technical staff for drafting. I encourage your agencies to continue to put energy and effort into your contributions for this highly regarded report. And I especially encourage you to prioritise the participation of your relevant experts in the Task Force's gender working group.

Remember, the FSDR sets the agenda for Member States' thinking on financing for sustainable development, and will be critical to Member States coming to agreement on how to make progress. We need input from all of you to successfully deliver advice to Member States that meets the challenges of today.

Let me move on to this year's thematic chapter. There is a grave danger of a sharply diverging world, with many countries at risk of sinking deeper into a cycle of unsustainable debt, austerity, unemployment, poverty and hunger. They potentially face a lost decade for sustainable development. We highlighted this in last year's report and provided a broad set of recommendations for addressing the pandemic.

The thematic chapter of the 2022 FSDR will focus on options for fiscally constrained developing countries, many of which have high debt burdens, to continue to fight the pandemic and invest in sustainable development. The chapter will be tightly integrated with the FSDR chapters on debt sustainability and systemic issues, which cover the provision of adequate liquidity, monetary policy developments, and financial policies. Throughout the chapter, there will be a strong emphasis on the interlinkages between economic, social, and environmental factors, including climate. It will explore both concrete policy solutions for national governments, and those that require international support or facilitation, to address the lack of fiscal space for investment in pandemic response and sustainable development.

In addition, each chapter of the report will thread through messages on inequalities, including gender inequality, and climate considerations. I would also like to note the special mandates given by Member States for the Task Force to consider the role of credit rating agencies and multidimensional vulnerabilities as criteria in debt relief initiatives. These 2 themes are central to this year's thematic chapter, particularly for developing countries, including LDCs and SIDS.

I look forward to hearing your thoughts on how we should shape this year's report.

Distinguished colleagues,

Let me also say a few words on the development of Integrated National Financing Frameworks, another important area of joint work for this Task Force. Integrated Financing Frameworks (INFFs) are being used to support implementation of national financing plans on the ground in about 70 countries already. They are a valuable option for countries looking to find practical ways to implement the Addis Agenda.

Thanks to you, the Task Force has already produced guidance material on the main building blocks of INFFs. We are now developing INFF guidance related to specific groups of countries, specifically least developed countries and SIDS, and thematic priorities, such as climate finance. Your inputs and contributions to this work will be highly appreciated. The in-country efforts of your agencies to support the development and implementation of INFFs on the ground will also be highly valued.

I am looking to you for your thoughts and guidance on the framing of the thematic chapter and the policy solutions we should recommend. Please use this opportunity to share your perspectives and suggestions, on any of the issues I have raised or on other topics you feel are critical to the financing agenda.

In the interest of time, I will ask you to be brief, and speak for no more than 3 minutes, so that all partners get a chance to participate, and so that we all can get to our next appointments on time.

The floor is open.