

TALK AT A BREAKFAST MEETING, IN PREPARATION FOR THE 2018 ECOSOC SPECIAL MEETING,
“TOWARDS SUSTAINABLE, RESILIENT AND INCLUSIVE SOCIETIES THROUGH PARTICIPATION OF ALL.”

KNOWLEDGE FOR SOCIAL, ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL INCLUSION

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We are here due to the leadership of the President of ECOSOC, Her Excellency Marie Chatardová, the Permanent Representative of the Czech Republic to the United Nations in New York, who has made the priority of her Presidency *fostering sustainable, resilient and inclusive societies through participation of all*.

I would also like to thank Her Excellency María Emma Mejía Vélez, the Permanent Representative of Colombia to the United Nations, for co-hosting this event which focuses on the role of academia and knowledge institutions in supporting inclusion and participation. She is well known for her leadership on these issues, especially in her work advancing the leadership and empowerment of women.

In my talk, I will offer a perspective from the point of view of the [Pathfinders for Peaceful, Just and Inclusive Societies](#). The Pathfinders are a group of member states and other partners, convened by Brazil, Sierra Leone, and Switzerland. We are committed to accelerating action on the SDG targets for peaceful, just and inclusive societies (SDG16+).

Inclusion is a central theme of [the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development](#). This is an agenda that emerged from a participatory process of unprecedented scale and reach (the [MyWorld survey](#) gathered the views of almost ten million people).

The agenda is based around a vision of “a just, equitable, tolerant, open and socially inclusive world in which the needs of the most vulnerable are met.” When they agreed it, the world’s leaders were clear that they expected very broad participation in its implementation.

In particular, they [identified](#) children and young women and young men as “critical agents of change” and promised that the Sustainable Development Goals would provide them with “a platform to channel their infinite capacities for activism into the creation of a better world.”

Targets for inclusive societies can be found across the 2030 Agenda. Highlights include social, economic and political inclusion (10.2), inclusive and participatory decision-making (16.7), women’s participation and leadership (5.5), and the promotion of global citizenship (4.7).

In September at the UN General Assembly, the Pathfinders launched the [Roadmap for Peaceful, Just and Inclusive Societies](#). This is described by the three convening governments as a ‘first guide’ to the implementation of the SDG16+ targets.

The roadmap identifies inclusion as one of three *transformative strategies*, alongside prevention and institutional renewal. These strategies will unlock progress across all dimensions of sustainable development.

According to the roadmap, “many feel excluded from their societies and from globalization. Greater inclusion and empowerment will enable growing numbers of people to work together for a better world.”

The roadmap makes nine practical recommendations for a catalytic action *empowering people as agents of change* (see box).

1. Assess models for participation in sustainable development and make recommendations on context-specific strategies and best practice, with an emphasis on the role of women, young people, and marginalized groups.
2. Invest in programs that demonstrate how communities can participate in the development of policy and in strengthening public services.
3. Use Open Government action plans to deepen citizen-led governance, enhance civic participation and accountability, and promote representation in institutions.
4. Focus on the role of frontline public servants – such as teachers, health workers, and the police – in delivering accountable and responsive services.
5. Use digital tools to enable new forms of direct participation in public life, drawing on the insights and expertise of young people.
6. Advance women’s participation and leadership in their societies, including as peacebuilders and in crisis settings.
7. Increase opportunities for youth leadership and activism, enabling children and young people to participate in decision making and to hold their leaders to account, while gathering data on their participation.
8. Invest in civic education, and in the knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development.
9. Protect and enhance civic space and make the case for citizen engagement.

Box 1: Recommendations for Catalytic Action 8

The Pathfinders are now deeply engaged in using the roadmap as a tool for accelerating implementation. Over the past month, four initiatives demonstrate the centrality of inclusion and participation to this work.

In Stockholm, the [End Violence Solutions Summit](#) set a practical agenda for preventing the violence that affects [1 billion children](#) every year. The summit was based around [INSPIRE](#), the seven evidence-based strategies for ending violence against children that have been developed by WHO, UNICEF, the World Bank, the Global Partnership to End Violence Against Children, and other actors.

At the summit, as well as hearing from ministers and senior representatives from 16 [pathfinder countries](#),¹ children themselves spoke of their work to end violence. According to the summit’s [proclamation](#), “we have listened to the voices of the children as equal members of our society. We have been moved by their power, vision and demands of us, the adult world, to act and do more.

[For more detail, see our [review](#) of the summit.]

In Buenos Aires, the Task Force on Justice was [launched](#) as an initiative of the Pathfinders. The Task Force is chaired by ministers from Argentina, the Netherlands, and Sierra Leone, and by Hina Jilani from [The Elders](#). It will identify the strategies needed to deliver SDG16.3, on access to justice for all, to the roughly four billion people currently outside the protection of the rule of the law.

Task Force members visited justice centers in two disadvantaged communities in Buenos Aires, one run by the government and the other by civil society. In each case, they witnessed the importance of taking justice to the people and of participatory approaches to solving the legal problems that excluded so many from sustainable development.

I travelled from Argentina to Addis Ababa, at the invitation of the government of Ethiopia and the United Nations Resident Coordinator, to take part in a workshop exploring the implementation of SDG16 in a country whose [vision](#) is to achieve lower middle-income status, where “democracy, good governance and social justice are maintained through people's participation.”

In Addis, I reviewed strong evidence that investment in inclusive governance at local levels, combined with supporting women’s empowerment, is likely to have disproportionate impact on all 17 SDGs.

¹ Japan joined the list of Pathfinder countries at the End Violence Summit

Meanwhile, the government is keenly aware that, with [600,000 additional young people](#) joining the labor market each year, it needs to redouble efforts to meet the aspirations of the next generation, and to allow them to participate fully in building Ethiopia's prosperity and resilience.

Finally, earlier this week I was in Washington DC for the [launch](#) of a landmark study on prevention. [Pathways for Peace](#) is a joint report from the United Nations and World Bank. I was a senior external adviser to this report and a co-author of the final chapter that sets out recommendations.

The [central message](#) of the report is "the need to address grievances around exclusion from access to power, opportunity and security." It [argues](#) that prevention must be inclusive:

Too often, preventive action is focused on elites. In complex, fragmented, and protracted conflicts, an inclusive approach to prevention puts an understanding of grievances and agency at the center of national and international engagement. It recognizes the importance of understanding people and their communities: their trust in institutions, confidence in the future, perceptions of risk, and experience of exclusion and injustice. It uses this understanding to disaggregate risks and build inclusive responses to risk that enhance state legitimacy, reduce polarization, and avert violence.

In each of these four examples, we see clear demand for more inclusive policies, strategies and programs, and greater participation in fostering more sustainable and resilient societies. For those of us who work in universities and other knowledge institutions, our priority must be to support this demand. Let me identify six priorities.

First, we must look holistically at inclusion, identifying approaches across the three dimensions of social, economic and political inclusion. Each dimension requires different approaches. And if we fail in one dimension, we are likely eventually to fail in them all.

Second, our most urgent task is to provide the evidence that will underpin greater inclusion and participation. We have a great deal of data about the scope of the problem, but much less understanding of how to respond to exclusion, distrust, grievances and populism. This is no longer about the *why*, but the *what* and the *how*.

Third, we should recognize that inclusion cannot be done piecemeal. This is not about one-off initiatives and projects, but for approaches that have the systemic impact needed to build more sustainable and resilient societies. We need a program of research that identifies examples of where systemic impact has been achieved and identifies the factors that have led to success.

Fourth, we must systematize knowledge and present it in a format that can be used by decision makers. Our research needs to reach those working in all sectors with compelling evidence of the impact and cost-effectiveness of more participatory models and approaches. This will allow investments to be made in scaling up those models that work best.

Fifth, we must build learning between countries. Different societies face different inclusion challenges, but innovative models can be found in all countries and regions. In this case, the gradient does not flow from more developed to less developed societies. In many cases, the learning will flow in the other direction.

Finally, we must be inclusive in developing and implementing this research agenda. We need to build networks of researchers from around the world, including those from the grassroots who do not work in formal institutions. For universities, this means breaking down barriers that currently exclude many of those who we need to work on new approaches to inclusion and participation.

During her Presidency, Ambassador Chatardová's leadership offers us the chance to work hard to set an agenda on participation and inclusion. I look forward to the special meetings on this theme that are planned in [Prague](#) and in [New York](#). I hope the ECOSOC presidency will culminate in July with actionable proposals on inclusion and participation as essential strategies for the success of the 2030 Agenda.

Our eyes should then be on [High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development](#) in July 2019 which will focus on ‘empowering people and ensuring inclusiveness and equality’ and review, amongst other goals, SDG16 (*peaceful, just and inclusive societies*) and SDG10 (*reduce inequality*).

In September of that year, Presidents and Prime Ministers will gather for the first four-yearly review of the 2030 Agenda, an event where they will “mobilize further actions to accelerate implementation” of all 17 SDGs.

We must use the next 18 months to bring together the knowledge and evidence that will ensure that inclusion and participation are central to these new commitments.