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Social development

Resolution adopted by the General Assembly on 16 December 2021

[on the report of the Third Committee (A/76/454, para. 51)]

76/131. Fiftieth anniversary of the United Nations Volunteers programme and twentieth anniversary of the International Year of Volunteers

The General Assembly,

Noting that the year 2021 marks the fiftieth anniversary of the United Nations Volunteers programme since its commencement in January 1971 and also marks the twentieth anniversary of the International Year of Volunteers,

Recalling its resolution [73/140](#) of 17 December 2018, entitled “Volunteering for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development”,

Acknowledging the important role volunteers have played and continue to play in their response to the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, particularly in exercising an active role in national responses and recovery and in addressing the consequences of COVID-19 and mitigating its socioeconomic impacts, including as health workers and other front-line essential workers,

Recognizing the universal desire of people to contribute through volunteering and the importance of ensuring the safety and security of volunteers through adequate insurance, as well as physical and mental health support,

Recognizing also that young persons play a major role in volunteering worldwide, and in that regard reaffirming the importance of involving youth and both youth-led and youth-focused organizations in all matters of concern to them, including within the General Assembly, the Economic and Social Council and its functional commissions and relevant United Nations conferences,

Acknowledging that the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development¹ creates an unprecedented global and national urgency to accelerate progress in the recognition, promotion, facilitation, networking and integration of volunteer action by and

¹ Resolution [70/1](#).



between Governments, communities, civil society, the private sector, academia, the media and international actors, including the United Nations system,

Welcoming the integration of volunteerism into all relevant issues considered at the United Nations, in particular the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, in which it adopted a comprehensive, far-reaching and people-centred set of universal and transformative Sustainable Development Goals and targets, and the Addis Ababa Action Agenda of the Third International Conference on Financing for Development,² in which it is acknowledged that volunteers and other stakeholders will be important to mobilize and share knowledge, expertise, technology and financial resources, complement the efforts of Governments and support the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals, in particular in developing countries, as well as resolution 75/233 of 21 December 2020 on the quadrennial comprehensive policy review of operational activities for development of the United Nations system, in which it recognizes volunteerism as a powerful and cross-cutting means of implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development,

Welcoming also the publication by the United Nations Volunteers programme of the report entitled *2022 State of the World's Volunteerism Report: Building Equal and Inclusive Societies*, which presents new evidence on the relationship between volunteers and the State and illustrates how emerging models of volunteering can help address the needs of communities in a more inclusive and responsive manner,

Acknowledging the existing contribution of the organizations of the United Nations system in support of volunteering, especially the work of the United Nations Volunteers programme around the world, acknowledging also the efforts of the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies to promote volunteerism throughout its global network, noting the work of other volunteer-involving organizations at the local, national, regional and global levels, and acknowledging the important role of civil society in facilitating volunteering,

Acknowledging also that, as volunteering practices evolve, including online and digital volunteering, there is a need to understand how they shape the participation of volunteers and to leave no one behind by facilitating access, and stressing in this regard the need to close all digital divides, which have been aggravated by the COVID-19 pandemic, both between and within countries and including rural-urban, youth-older persons and gender digital divides, and to promote digital inclusion, by taking into account national and regional contexts and addressing the challenges associated with access, affordability, digital literacy and digital skills and awareness and by ensuring that the benefits of new technologies are available to all, taking into account the needs of those who are in vulnerable situations,

1. *Welcomes* the report of the Secretary-General on volunteering for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development,³ which aims for all human beings to fulfil their potential in dignity and equality and in a healthy environment and notes the progress made by stakeholders under the plan of action to integrate volunteering into the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development;

2. *Recalls* the importance of integrating volunteerism, as appropriate, into the planning for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and encourages the United Nations system, civil society and the private sector, in partnership with Member States, to support such efforts and promote a conducive environment for volunteerism and volunteers to enhance the sustainability of development results;

² Resolution 69/313, annex.

³ A/76/137.

3. *Recognizes* the critical contributions of volunteers in this regard, and commends the contributions from national and international volunteers for their indispensable interaction with local populations in disaster risk reduction and recovery, most recently evidenced by their performance in the aftermath of natural disasters, including those aggravated by climate change in many parts of the world;

4. *Commends* the increasing link between volunteerism and sport, which, through the invaluable contributions of national and international volunteers to the preparation and delivery of major sports events, inter alia, the Olympic and Paralympic Games, contributes to the promotion of the ideal of peace and inclusive society;

5. *Also commends* the measurement of the scale and scope of volunteering on a national level and the integration of volunteerism into national youth policies and strategies, disaster preparedness and response strategies, as well as national development plans, and encourages Governments, in partnership with United Nations entities, volunteer-involving organizations, the private sector, civil society, including academia, and other stakeholders, as appropriate, to integrate volunteerism into national development strategies, plans and policies, United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Frameworks or equivalent planning frameworks;

6. *Encourages* Member States to support volunteer action for the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals, including the integration of volunteerism into sector priorities and national development strategies, plans and policies, and to invest in volunteers and volunteering as part of national capacities to promote inclusion, strengthen participation and foster innovation and to strengthen evidence on the quality of participation through volunteering under the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, together with other stakeholders;

7. *Encourages* the meaningful participation and integration of all people, including youth, older persons, women, migrants, refugees, persons with disabilities, minorities and other marginalized groups, into volunteer-involving programmes and projects, with the provision of the appropriate means to leverage the full potential of volunteerism;

8. *Commends* the Member States that highlighted the contributions of volunteering to the Sustainable Development Goals in their voluntary national reviews for the high-level political forum on sustainable development held in 2016, 2017, 2018, 2019, 2020 and 2021, and encourages all Member States to increasingly cooperate with volunteer-involving and civil society organizations, as well as the private sector, in supporting such efforts and promoting a conducive environment for volunteerism and volunteers to enhance the sustainability of development results, to include information on the scale, contribution and impact of volunteerism in future voluntary national reviews and engage volunteers for the monitoring of progress towards achieving the Goals at the national and subnational levels and as part of wider people's engagement;

9. *Encourages* all Member States to invest in measuring the scale and contribution of people's voluntary efforts, in line with the nineteenth International Conference of Labour Statisticians standard on volunteer work and the International Labour Organization *Volunteer Work Measurement Guide*, and to collect and utilize high-quality data disaggregated by sex, age and disability to support and integrate volunteerism into national strategies and to measure its impact on the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development;

10. *Requests* United Nations entities, as well as United Nations country teams, to reflect the distinct contributions of volunteering in Sustainable Development Cooperation Frameworks and country programme documents, in line with resolution

[75/233](#) on the quadrennial comprehensive review of operational activities for development of the United Nations system;

11. *Recalls* the call to action on “Volunteering in the decade of action”, welcomes the contribution of volunteers to the global efforts to overcome the COVID-19 pandemic, and emphasizes the key role of volunteers in responding to, rebuilding and recovering from the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as in the implementation of the health-related goals and targets of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, inter alia, universal health coverage, recognizing that the COVID-19 pandemic has a disproportionately heavy impact on the poor and most vulnerable, with repercussions on health and development gains;

12. *Requests* Member States and the United Nations system to work together with volunteer-involving organizations, including from civil society, to support efforts to enhance the protection, security and well-being of volunteers, calls upon States to create and maintain, in law and in practice, a safe and enabling environment for volunteers, and encourages the adoption of good practices in the promotion, facilitation and, where applicable, management of volunteerism;

13. *Recognizes* the role of the United Nations Volunteers programme in supporting the integration of volunteerism into the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development by sharing relevant knowledge and experiences, and encourages Member States and other stakeholders to share their continued efforts to integrate volunteering into the 2030 Agenda through the global Knowledge Portal on Volunteerism hosted by the United Nations Volunteers programme, including policies, strategies, research and evidence and good practices on volunteering for the Sustainable Development Goals;

14. *Also recognizes* the Special Voluntary Fund for the United Nations Volunteers as the resource enabling the United Nations Volunteers programme to develop initiatives that embed the values of volunteerism in the work of Governments and the United Nations system, and encourages Member States in a position to do so to enhance their contributions to the Fund, thereby ensuring continuing activities;

15. *Further recognizes* the role of information and communications technologies in expanding innovative forms of volunteering, and encourages Governments, the private sector, civil society and other stakeholders to support online volunteering, including United Nations online volunteering that provides inclusive technology-enabled global platforms;

16. *Encourages* Member States and development partners to continue to share knowledge and scale up ways to address barriers to volunteering for all, including persons in vulnerable situations;

17. *Requests* the Secretary-General to report to the General Assembly at its seventy-ninth session on the implementation of the present resolution, under the item entitled “Social development”.

*53rd plenary meeting
16 December 2021*