



STATEMENT

BY

**H.E. MR. COLLEN V. KELAPILE
PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED NATIONS ECONOMIC AND
SOCIAL COUNCIL (ECOSOC)**

DURING THE 2021 SDG MOMENT

**20 SEPTEMBER 2021
GENERAL ASSEMBLY HALL
08:00**

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**Excellencies, Heads of State and Government,
Distinguished delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

- 1.** I am honoured for this opportunity, to speak at this auspicious event of the 2021 SDG Moment.
- 2.** The SDG Moment provides a unique opportunity to renew our commitment to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. It also gives us a real moment to reaffirm our political resolve to take decisive action to accelerate the realization of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals in the Decade of Action.
- 3.** This high level event is convened at a time when we are facing unprecedented challenges and setbacks, in a time span of less than a decade to our destination of 2030.

4. As the Secretary-General has observed in his report on Our Common Agenda: **“humanity faces a stark and urgent choice: a breakdown or a breakthrough.”**
5. For us to achieve a breakthrough, we need to embrace transformational change and launch bold collective actions that will spur us forward in our development path.
6. The path is in no doubt a steep one, especially due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. But this is despite miraculously speedy achievements in vaccine development, which gave the world hope that we can indeed eradicate the pandemic at similar speed.
7. You will all agree that the fight against the COVID-19 pandemic is far from over. As you already know, the majority of our countries, especially those in the Global South, lack access to COVID-19 vaccines, therapeutics and diagnostics.

8. Furthermore, the crisis has resulted in regression in the progress we had made towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals, thereby worsening many other pre-existing ills that include inequalities and poverty.
9. **Excellencies**, before we were confronted by the COVID-19 pandemic, we already and continue to grapple with other global challenges such as the climate change crisis and biodiversity loss.
10. The COVID-19 pandemic has in effect compounded these challenges that we have been working steadfastly to resolve, in order get back on track to realising our development agenda.
11. I therefore, share the view that it is only through unprecedented global cooperation and global solidarity that we can recover sustainably from the pandemic, and the other challenges that we are facing, to get back on track to achieve the SDGs.

- 12.** We will only be able to lift the entire world out of inequality and disease if we pursue the SDGs as part and parcel of policies and programmes to address the pandemic and its multifaceted impacts.

Excellencies,

- 13.** The Voluntary National Reviews (VNR's), conducted by 42 countries at the 2021 High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development conducted under the auspices of ECOSOC, has demonstrated that several countries, including middle- and low-income countries, are already applying the lesson gained from the crisis to initiate or accelerate the structural changes we need, to achieve the SDGs. Many have designed their own social protection plans to address the financial hardship from COVID-19.
- 14.** Some countries have used the emergency health or social protection measures as a springboard to ensure universal health coverage and stronger and inclusive social protection systems.

15. I therefore wish to take this opportunity to encourage those countries that have not yet presented their Voluntary National Reviews to consider doing so, and I also invite those that have already done, to do it again, as VNRs allow for deeper reflection on the implementation of the 2030 Agenda.
16. **Excellencies**, our theme for ECOSOC and the 2022 High-Level Political Forum is **"Building Back Better from COVID-19 while Advancing the Full Implementation of the 2030 Agenda."**
17. This theme was developed with the view to channel our efforts, in the coming months, towards swift recovery from COVID-19, moving towards realizing the SDGs.

- 18.** I therefore look forward to working closely with all UN Member States, as we engage in the 2022 HLPF's Voluntary National Review process. I wish to underscore here that VNRs are an important mechanism for peer-learning, including on achieving an SDG-guided recovery from the pandemic.
- 19.** The Council will also contribute on policy guidance to promote well targeted financing for the SDGs. It will drive innovation, science and technology as a means to build resilience and overcome pressing challenges.
- 20.** I am already working with the President of the General Assembly so that our two Charter bodies can jointly push for delivering on the commitments on climate change, building also on the forthcoming Glasgow Conference, and the 2030 Agenda.

21. During my Presidency, ECOSOC and the HLPF will work in an inclusive manner, listening particularly to the world's youth, the poorest and most vulnerable, involving women and girls and civil society organizations, as well as promoting effective multi-stakeholder partnerships for SDGs achievement.

Excellencies,

22. As I conclude, I wish to stress the importance to build on our best past achievements, while we also adopt new transformative and creative actions to move forward, united in our collective ambition for a world where no one is left behind.

23. I will continue to use ECOSOC and the HLPF to mobilize the critically needed political will, innovation and decisive action to accelerate the achievement of the 2030 Agenda. The Council remains at your disposal to contribute in addressing the current and emerging challenges.

I thank you for your kind attention.

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