

Opening of the high-level segment of ECOSOC and ministerial segment of HLPF
by
H.E. Frederick Musiiwa Makamure Shava, President of ECOSOC
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Your Excellency, Mr. Peter Thompson, President of the General Assembly
Your Excellency, Mr. Antonio Guterres, Secretary-General of the United Nations
Distinguished Ministers,
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am pleased to welcome you to the 2017 High-level Segment of the Economic and Social Council and the Ministerial segment of the High-Level Political Forum on sustainable development under the auspices of ECOSOC.

I extend warm greetings to all of you gathered here this morning. I note that in addition to the high turn out we have had from Prime Ministers, Ministers and distinguished delegates, we are also joined by many multistakeholder participants, many of whom have also travelled long distances. Such a diverse participation will certainly enrich our dialogue.

I also extend my warm greetings to those joining us from around the world via webcast.

Distinguished Ministers,

These are challenging and turbulent times.

Although the prevalence of extreme poverty has steadily declined in recent decades, the total number of people living in extreme poverty -- more than 767 million in 2013 -- remains unacceptably high.

Inequalities among and within countries remain deep.

Conflicts, tensions and terrorism are threatening humanity.

Global temperatures are rising. Many regions are feeling the impact of climate change.

In the face of these challenges, solidarity and working together is more important than ever. Indeed, multilateralism is based on the recognition that we cannot overcome these – and other – global challenges in isolation.

Collective support for the poor and most vulnerable is in the interest of all of us.

This solidarity and common responsibility are embodied in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its Sustainable Development Goals. It offers an action plan for people, planet, peace, prosperity and partnership.

In order to live up to its promise to end poverty and leave no one behind, this historic Agenda demands innovative and far-reaching action at the local, national, regional and international levels.

It also requires increased integration, strong coordination and enhanced collaboration both between and within countries and regions.

Distinguished Ministers
Ladies and gentlemen,

Eradicating poverty in all its forms and dimensions, particularly extreme poverty, remains the greatest global challenge facing us.

With this in mind, the 2017 theme of the High-level Political Forum for sustainable development under the auspices of ECOSOC is *“Eradicating poverty and promoting prosperity in a changing world”*.

In alignment with this HLPF theme is the ECOSOC 2017 main theme of *“Eradicating poverty in all its forms and dimensions through promoting sustainable development, expanding opportunities and addressing related challenges”*.

A key message from these main themes is that poverty eradication remains an indispensable requirement for sustainable development.

Today, one person in eight lives on less than \$2 dollars a day. And many of those who have escaped extreme poverty still live precariously near the poverty line.

Poverty eradication requires building synergies across all dimensions of sustainable development.

It also requires prioritizing marginalized and vulnerable people and communities so as to leave no one behind.

Distinguished Ministers,

I will share the main messages of the first week of the high-level political forum on sustainable development together with my Vice Presidents after the key note speech, but for now let me highlight just a few broad issues.

This is the first HLPF to engage in a review of progress toward achieving a subset of seven out of the 17 SDGs.

The review has brought the interconnectedness of the economic, environmental and social dimensions of sustainable development to the forefront and underscored the need for an integrated approach. Without progress in all three areas, we have no progress at all.

Countries are improving inter-institutional and inter-sectoral coordination. They have adopted sustainable development strategies. And Parliaments are mainstreaming the SDGs with provinces localizing the SDGs for implementation.

Social inclusion is a key concept for determining whether we are ensuring that no one is left behind. Access to universal health coverage, free primary and secondary education, enhanced water supply systems, stable and reliable energy, and resilient and safe infrastructure that supports national development are noted enablers for poverty eradication.

Women and girls are disproportionately impacted by climate change, disasters and conflict, especially when living in poverty. They are still deprived of their basic rights and opportunities in many parts of the world. Yet women and girls are the primary drivers of development, and must be empowered as agents of change.

Lack of official statistics, data and effective monitoring systems remain a significant challenge to measuring progress toward reaching the SDGs, both domestically and at the global level.

Integrated and coherent implementation of the 2030 Agenda at the national level requires inter-ministerial collaboration and a clear connection to the means of implementation. It also requires full multi-stakeholder engagement.

Excellencies,

During the next three days of the HLPF Ministerial Segment, 44 countries will present their Voluntary National Reviews, including my own.

Undoubtedly, these presentations will be very relevant and useful, confirming the high-level political forum on sustainable development as the key global venue for follow up and review and shared learning.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Your discussions over the coming days offer an opportunity to show where critical progress has been made and pinpoint areas for new or intensified efforts.

We are also having two special events, namely the Business forum and Partnership Exchange that will bring together the business sector and partnerships to see how they can continue contributing to the implementation of the SDGs.

I am also organizing a Ministerial luncheon on Wednesday where Ministers and heads of UN agencies will engage in honest discussions about what has already been done and where the progress is and where challenges are and how to overcome them.

I call on everyone to draw on your ingenuity, resources and political will – and your spirit of solidarity with all of humanity – so that no one is left behind.

Thank you.