

Ministerial declaration of the high-level segment of the 2020 session of the Economic and Social Council on the annual theme “Accelerated action and transformative pathways: realizing the decade of action and delivery for sustainable development”

Ministerial declaration of the 2020 high-level political forum on sustainable development, convened under the auspices of the Economic and Social Council, on the theme “Accelerated action and transformative pathways: realizing the decade of action and delivery for sustainable development”

[\[I Introduction\]](#)

We, the Ministers, and high representatives, have adopted during this challenging time that our world is facing, the present declaration at the high-level segment of the 2020 session of the Economic and Social Council and the 2020 high-level political forum on sustainable development,

1. As we commemorate the 75th Anniversary of the United Nations, we reaffirm our commitment to international cooperation and multilateralism. We also reaffirm our belief in the importance of the United Nations, its purposes and principles as enshrined in the Charter. We recognize the central role of the United Nations system in supporting the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, as well as catalyzing and coordinating a global response to the COVID-19 pandemic, based on unity, solidarity, multilateralism and international cooperation.
2. The unprecedented COVID-19 crisis has revealed our world’s vulnerabilities and inequalities. This emphasizes the urgent need for a global renewed commitment to solidarity, across the multilateral system, nations, people and generations. We stress that accelerated progress towards implementing the 2030 Agenda should be our collective roadmap to respond and build back better and greener; to help prevent future pandemics; achieve a sustainable, resilient and prosperous future for all; and respect, protect and fulfill human rights.
3. As we are entering the decade of action and delivery for sustainable development, we reaffirm our commitment to implement the 2030 Agenda in its entirety. We also reaffirm the principles recognized in the 2030 Agenda, which is people-centered, transformative and universal in nature and that its Goals and targets are integrated and indivisible, balancing the economic, social and environmental dimensions of sustainable development. We need an integrated approach that will leverage interlinkages and minimize trade-offs across Goals and targets, lead to sustainable and inclusive recovery, and accelerate the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals in the framework of the decade of action and delivery.
4. We reaffirm that eradicating poverty in all its forms and dimensions, including extreme poverty, is the greatest global challenge and an indispensable requirement for sustainable development, and note with concern that, for the first time in decades, the trend of poverty reduction is being reversed.
5. We recognize that the poorest and the people in vulnerable situations are the most affected by the COVID-19 crisis. We will place a focus on those people in our policies and actions. We will undertake every effort to leave no one behind and to reach the furthest behind first. Those whose needs are reflected in the 2030 Agenda include all children, youth, persons with disabilities, people living with HIV/AIDS, older persons, indigenous peoples, refugees and internally displaced persons and migrants. We also intend to see the Goals and targets met for all nations and peoples and for all segments of society.
6. We reaffirm that the achievement of gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls will make a crucial contribution to progress across all the Sustainable Development Goals and targets and that responses to COVID-19 should be gender-sensitive

[\[II Assessment of the situation regarding the 2030 Agenda\]](#)

7. The Secretary-General Report on Progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals and the Global Sustainable Development Report show that the progress in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda

continues to be too slow and uneven and that it has either stalled or been reversed in some areas. The number of people suffering from hunger is on the rise; climate change is occurring much faster than anticipated, as evidenced by, inter alia, the impacts on oceans and seas, the loss of vulnerable ecosystems, and the retreat of mountain glaciers. Biodiversity loss, deforestation, emerging water crises, as well as global pollution from chemicals and waste remain global challenges, while desertification continues to increase; infrastructure building is lagging far behind the actual demands; conflicts and instability in many parts of the world have intensified; and inequality continues to increase within and among countries.

8. We acknowledge that the COVID-19 pandemic reinforces pre-existing obstacles to realizing the Goals, structural inequalities, gaps and systemic challenges and risks. It threatens to halt or obliterate the progress that has been made since 2015. We welcome the Secretary-General's efforts in coordinating a global response to the COVID-19 pandemic and its impacts, including his various initiatives in this regard. The effects of the pandemic have overwhelmed health systems globally, caused businesses and factories to shut down, pushed down commodity prices, investment and remittances, affected international human mobility, the tourism industry and related services, severely impacted the livelihoods of half of the global workforce, exacerbated unemployment, kept hundreds of millions of students out of schools, disproportionately affected people with pre-existing medical conditions and elderly people's lives and health, challenged the provision of humanitarian assistance and protection, disrupted global value and supply chains, affecting the supply of products. It is expected to push tens of millions of people back into extreme poverty and hunger. It also poses risks of regression in gender equality and puts effective and transparent institutions at risk. The insufficient efforts to implement the Goals exacerbated the impact of the pandemic. We also acknowledge the multidimensional nature of the pandemic and its severe impact on all countries, especially developing countries and countries in special situations.

[\[Actions to be taken for the way forward\]](#)

9. We reaffirm our commitment to the actions in the political declaration adopted at the September 2019 SDG Summit and the preceding HLPF declarations. We emphasize that the decade of action should address the accelerated actions listed below, aimed at eradicating poverty in all its forms and dimensions, everywhere, achieving a sustainable and inclusive recovery from the pandemic and the full implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

10. We recognize the special challenges and needs facing the most vulnerable countries, in particular, African countries, least developed countries, landlocked developing countries, and small island developing States, as well as the specific challenges facing many middle-income countries, countries in conflict and post-conflict situations, in pursuing sustainable development. Taking into account the different levels of development, and the disproportionate impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on developing countries, we will support them by taking urgent steps to help them build back better and achieve sustainable development, including through enhanced concessional finance and recovery programmes.

11. We invite the international community and all relevant stakeholders to cooperate and mobilize resources, including through financial and in-kind assistance, as well as direct aid to host countries and refugee populations, with a view to enhancing the capacity of and reducing the heavy burden borne by countries and communities hosting refugees, in accordance with the purposes and principles of the UN Charter, international law and the guiding principles of the humanitarian emergency assistance of the United Nations, as reflected in the relevant resolutions of the General Assembly.

12. We strongly believe that there can be no sustainable development without peace and no peace without sustainable development. We will redouble our collective efforts to build peaceful, just, and inclusive societies through reducing inequalities within and among countries, enhancing our ability to prevent and resolve conflicts. We call for further effective measures and actions to be taken, in conformity with international law, to remove the obstacles to the full realization of the right of self-determination of peoples living under colonial and foreign occupation, which continue to adversely affect their economic and social

development as well as their environment. We reaffirm, in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations, the need to respect the territorial integrity and political independence of States. We also commit to respecting, protecting and fulfilling human rights for all, ending all forms of discrimination, racism, xenophobia and related intolerance, ensuring equal access to justice and achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls. We will also upscale our efforts to build and strengthen more effective, accountable and transparent institutions, and ensure equal access to basic services and opportunities, with a special emphasis on people in vulnerable situations. We recognize that violent extremism, terrorism, organized crime, corruption, illicit financial flows, global health threats, humanitarian emergencies and forced displacement of people, threaten to reverse much of the development progress made in recent decades.

13. We are determined to invest and cooperate in prevention and resilience as essential components of disaster risk reduction, to increase preparedness and to build back better, in accordance with the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030. We will combine short term actions with long term disaster risk reduction strategies and policies, to prevent the creation of new risks, reduce existing risks, resist shocks and mitigate their consequences, including by investing in reducing hazard exposure and vulnerability, infrastructure to bridge infrastructure gap, nature-based solutions, information and communication networks, early warning systems, and evidence-based policymaking.

14. We will protect and advance human wellbeing, by promoting investment in, and ensure equitable and universal access to, quality and inclusive education at all levels, universal, quality and affordable healthcare services, social protection, affordable and safe housing, safe drinking water, adequate sanitation, safe, sufficient and nutritious food and access to energy and ICT. We will use all policy tools to mitigate the devastating impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. We will relaunch sustainable and inclusive growth, reduce income inequalities and address the financing challenges of developing countries to achieve sustainable development. We will promote a sustainable and inclusive recovery of our economies, including through circular economy, to protect the environment and create conditions for decent work for all, including for those in the informal economy, support and facilitate access to finance for micro, small and medium-sized enterprises and build their capacity, to help restore jobs and incomes.

15. We will ensure that emergency social and economic schemes integrate a gender perspective and the promotion and protection of the rights of the child. We recognise the multi-faceted impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on women and girls, who also face increased levels of violence, including gender-based violence and exploitation. We recommit to targeted and accelerated action to remove all legal, social and economic barriers to achieve gender equality, full, effective and meaningful participation in decision-making and the empowerment of all women and girls and their full and equal enjoyment of all human rights.

16. We will invest in strengthening national health and social protection systems, including to achieve universal health coverage, to help ensure a sustainable recovery from COVID-19, as well as pandemic preparedness and the prevention and detection of, and response to any future outbreaks. In light of the current pandemic, and given their weak health systems, high levels of debt and limited fiscal space, we commit to supporting all developing countries who are impacted the most by the pandemic, with greater emphasis on providing technical assistance, improving health facilities infrastructure and investing into quality health services and social protection systems. We underscore that equitable access, without any hindrance or form of discrimination, to quality vaccines, medicines, treatments, medical equipment, new diagnostics, and other health products for COVID-19 is a global priority and that their availability, accessibility, acceptability and affordability are fundamental to tackling the pandemic. We also recognize that COVID-19 vaccines should be made global public goods.

17. We remain determined to end hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition for all as a matter of priority and to end all forms of malnutrition, while ensuring sustainable and resilient food systems, promoting sustainable agriculture, including smallholder and family farming, that increases productivity and production, prevent food waste. Recognizing that COVID-19 has exacerbated food insecurity, and also recognizing that international trade is an engine for development, we will work to ensure the flow of vital

medical supplies, food and agricultural products, and other goods and services across borders, and work to resolve disruptions to the global supply chains to support the health and well-being of all people. We reiterate our commitment to promote a universal, rules-based, open, transparent, predictable, inclusive, non-discriminatory and equitable multilateral trading system under the World Trade Organization, as well as meaningful trade liberalization. We look forward to the 2021 Food Systems Summit.

18. We reaffirm that climate change is one of the greatest challenges of our time. We will strengthen our global response to climate change by accelerating the reductions in greenhouse gas emissions. We urge the Parties to the Paris Agreement to communicate or update their Nationally Determined Contributions under the Paris Agreement in 2020 and communicate to the UNFCCC Secretariat long-term low greenhouse gas emission development strategies. We reaffirm our commitment to the objectives, principles as well as to the full implementation of UNFCCC, Kyoto Protocol and the Paris Agreement, and stress the importance of engaging further efforts and mobilizing means of implementation, including, adequate financial support, for climate change mitigation, and adaptation, as well as strengthening resilience and averting, minimizing and addressing loss and damage, taking into account the specific needs and special circumstances of developing countries, especially those that are particularly vulnerable to the adverse effects of climate change.

19. We recommit to achieving a world in which humanity lives in harmony with nature and in which wildlife and other living species are protected and to reversing the trends in environmental degradation through the restoration of ecosystems, halting biodiversity loss and deforestation, integrating the conservation and sustainable use of natural resources, as well as the fair and equitable benefit-sharing of the use of genetic resources, into relevant national decision-making, ending the illegal and unsustainable trade and consumption of wildlife, forest restoration, combatting desertification and achieving land degradation neutrality, conserving and sustainably using oceans, seas and marine resources, promoting sustainable consumption and production patterns. We also recommit to improving resource efficiency, and significantly reducing pollution and waste, including discharge of plastic litter into the oceans. In that regard, we emphasize that biodiversity, climate and health must be addressed holistically, including through, inter-alia, investing in scaling up ecosystem-based approaches, nature-based solutions, sustainable infrastructure and other possible strategies, as appropriate. We will promote a coherent approach for addressing biodiversity loss, climate change and land and ecosystem degradation including between the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, the Convention on Biological Diversity and the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification. We also recall, in this context, the relevant initiative of CBD COP14.

20. We reaffirm our commitment for a universal access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all. We commit to accelerating the deployment of sustainable energy technologies, including through promoting access and investment in clean energy technologies and energy infrastructure, as appropriate. We recognize that accelerating the transition to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all, and achieving universal access by 2030 and harnessing the opportunities from the rapid declines in the cost of renewable energy, could facilitate sustainable recovery from COVID-19, long-term resilience, and advance the interconnected Sustainable Development Goals. We support solutions that are in line with people's needs and that support local economic activities. It is also critical that we scale up capacity-building, research and development, including by sharing experiences and data and promoting innovation and investments in energy efficiency across all sectors of the economy, and that we support sustainable energy deployment, particularly in developing countries.

21. We will continue to strengthen the science-policy interface through evidence-based policy making, support for research and development, harnessing science, technology and innovation, leveraging technologies to promote inclusive digital economy and build resilience across sectors. In this regard, we welcome the Secretary General's Roadmap for Digital Cooperation. We commit to enhance and promote capacity-building, infrastructure, connectivity and technical assistance initiatives as well as innovation and technologies towards advancing the Goals and targets, with special focus on developing countries, and commit to strengthening cooperation to close the digital divide within and among countries, and to develop knowledge societies.

22. We pledge to increase our level of ambition to mobilize and effectively use all available means of implementation, to fully implement the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the Addis Ababa Action Agenda, and the agreed conclusions and recommendations of the ECOSOC Fora on Financing for Development follow-up. We are deeply concerned about the impact of high debt levels on countries' ability to withstand the impact of the COVID-19 shock, and to invest in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. We commit to addressing the needs of the developing countries, especially those highly indebted and most vulnerable, and invite the international community and relevant stakeholders, including private and commercial creditors, to urgently and properly address those needs, and engage efforts towards a coordinated international debt relief effort for countries experiencing solvency problems, in close cooperation with International Financial Institutions. In this regard, we welcome the G20 debt suspension initiative as a first step towards a more ambitious global action.

23. We underline that strengthening global partnerships and enhancing the means of implementation for the SDGs have remained challenging due to scarce financial resources, trade tensions, technological obstacles, and lack of data. The pandemic is adding more hardships in the implementation of the SDGs. Strengthening multilateralism, international cooperation, and global partnership are more important than ever. We will continue to enhance South-South and triangular cooperation, reaffirming that South-South cooperation is a complement to but not substitute of North-South cooperation.

24. We commit to maintaining the integrity of the 2030 Agenda, by raising the ambition and ensuring continuous action on the targets of the Sustainable Development Goals with a 2020 timeline, by redoubling our efforts to achieve these targets in an accelerated timeframe, reflecting the urgency conveyed in the Agenda, and requesting the relevant intergovernmental fora and bodies to review, and as needed, adjust their frameworks so as to allow to update targets to reflect a suitable level of ambition for 2030. We invite the 75th session of the UN General Assembly to set out as soon as possible a process to ensure that the targets of the SDGs with a 2020 timeline are reviewed and, if needed updated, and we note that several of them are closely related to sets of targets to be updated through existing processes that could serve as a blueprint for the update of the corresponding SDG targets. The 2021 HLPF will review progress in this regard.

25. We commit to strengthening our national statistical capacities to address the gaps in data on the 2030 Agenda in order to allow countries to provide high quality, timely, reliable, disaggregated data and statistics and to fully integrate the Goals and targets in our monitoring and reporting systems and sharing of best practices in this regard. We encourage international cooperation, supporting statistical capacity-building in developing countries, in particular the most vulnerable countries, which face the greatest challenges in producing, collecting, analyzing and using high-quality, timely and reliable data and statistics. We will also respect the right to privacy.

26. We commend the 47 countries¹ that presented voluntary national reviews at the 2020 High-level political forum and urge the United Nations to further capitalize on the key findings and evidence extracted from the Voluntary National Reviews and encourage peer-learning. We encourage countries to share locally driven development approaches and pathways to accelerate the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. We also recognize the contribution of the regional reviews, as well as the contribution of the United Nations regional commissions, the regional fora on sustainable development, major groups and all relevant stakeholders.

¹ Argentina, Armenia, Austria, Bangladesh, Barbados, Benin, Brunei Darussalam, Bulgaria, Burundi, Comoros, Costa Rica, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ecuador, Estonia, Finland, Gambia (Republic of The), Georgia, Honduras, India, Kenya, Kyrgyzstan, Liberia, Libya, Malawi, Micronesia, Morocco, Mozambique, Nepal, Niger, Nigeria, Panama, Papua New Guinea, Peru, Republic of Moldova, Republic of North Macedonia, Russian Federation, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Samoa, Seychelles, Slovenia, Solomon Islands, Syrian Arab Republic, Trinidad and Tobago, Uganda, Ukraine, Uzbekistan, Zambia.

27. We commit to involving and empowering local authorities to ensure local ownership of SDGs, in particular by citizens, and to best translate national development priorities into local realities.

28. Finally, we will promote public engagement and innovative partnerships through a whole of government and whole of society approach, regional and local mobilization and actions, involvement of communities, people, civil society, academia and the private sector. We will continue to ensure the multistakeholder nature of the HLPF. We also acknowledge the role of the volunteers in the implementation of the Goals. We will invest more in human capital, to empower children, youth and women, as critical agents of change, and support their meaningful participation, in realizing the vision of the 2030 Agenda.