

STATEMENT

On the Occasion of the General Debate Of the 2020 Economic and Social Council High-Level Political Forum July 17, 2020, New York

HLPF 2020 Theme: “*Accelerated action and transformative pathways: realizing the decade of action and delivery for sustainable development*”

Madame President,

At the outset allow me to express my appreciation to you and the ECOSOC Bureau for convening the 2020 HLPF under the very important and timely theme “*Accelerated action and transformative pathways: realizing the decade of action and delivery for sustainable development*”

In the same vein, I would like to also acknowledge the efforts made by you and the wider UN system in demonstrating adaptability and tenacity in these unconventional circumstances to ensure that this important Forum is convened as scheduled.

The COVID-19 Pandemic has gravely exacerbated the challenges to development. It has aggravated our structural weakness and laid bare our vulnerabilities, upended lives, livelihoods and societies. It is clear that the Socio-economic fall outs triggered by the pandemic are certain to go well beyond 2020 for developing countries like Guyana and pose a consequential threat to development gains achieved over decades, both globally and as individual nations.

It is no secret much more commitment and action are required to put the world on track to achieve the SDGs. The COVID-19 Pandemic and its devastating impacts has now necessitated a global response for accelerated collective actions and transformative approaches to achieve the 2030 Agenda and deliver on the decade of action and the SDGs. Our journey towards achieving Agenda 2030 must now be meaningfully altered, internalising the experience of COVID-19, while maintaining the course to our collective ambition.

Madame President

It is for this reason my country believes that sustainable financing and sustainable policy solutions are indispensable to achieving sustainable development.

As we pursue accelerated actions and transformative pathways, the high level of ambition exemplified in the 2030 Agenda requires the strengthening of the means of implementation for developing countries, particularly in the areas of financing, technology, and capacity building to realise the Agenda.

On the matter of financing, it is important that macroeconomic and fiscal policies be geared towards providing developing countries with sufficient liquidity and fiscal space to allow them to finance their development programmes. In this vein, Guyana encourages the international financial institutions, multilateral and regional development banks, bilateral creditors and other commercial and private creditors, to provide immediate and substantial debt relief to developing countries.

Guyana calls for innovative financial instruments, such as debt service moratoriums, exclusion of potentially severe conditionalities such as austerity measures, restrictions on accessing new non-concessional loans, and capitalisation of deferred interest payments, specifically tailored to assist middle-income and upper middle-income countries that are heavily dependent on the trade of commodities.

We wish to highlight that domestic resource mobilisation and external private finance are expected to decline due to the COVID-19 triggered economic recession. As such, the response of financial institutions must be swift and adequately concessional, pre-empting any potential disruptions to financial flows. This response should also allow for a steady, easily accessible and expanding, stream of financing to be maintained to developing countries. Prior to COVID-19, many of these countries had significant financing gaps to address their developmental needs and are likely to experience developmental regressions due to the anticipated economic downturn.

In this context, we affirm that Official Development Assistance is key and indispensable for achieving sustainable development. Guyana urges donor countries to honour their ODA commitments and to align ODA with specific national priorities and strategies of developing countries to better meet their development needs.

Madame President

Climate Change poses an existential threat to low lying coastal states like Guyana and other Small Island Developing States. Guyana has acted in accordance with its Nationally Determined Contribution to pursue ambitious action to transition from high dependence on fossil fuels to near complete reliance on renewable energy, especially solar, by 2040. In conjunction with a wide range of partners, the Government of Guyana is leading the way through such undertakings as the Greening Towns Initiative, the Green Public Sector Programme and the Rural Energy Project.

In this vein, we call on the international community to act urgently and decisively to complement and facilitate the ambitious actions of the 'Guyanas' of our world who are on the frontlines of climate impacts and response. We call for renewed endeavours to scale up capacity to sustain such ambitious efforts. We call for action to enable greater access to technology, the strengthening of capacity and determined action to facilitate simplified access to global climate finance in order to advance our adaptation and resilience building initiatives.

We emphasise the importance of science, technology and innovation to achieving sustainable development and affirms that technology transfer is one of the core priorities of developing countries in implementing the 2030 Agenda, and in this regard, we underscore the need to accelerate the transfer of technologies, including on concessional and preferential terms, that are essential for implementing a wide range of SDGs.

Further, I would like to build on our key messages delivered at last year's HLPF. Many of the tenets remain pertinent to our discourse today. This would include the call to support strengthening data systems and to improve human capital development, to underpin the implementation of Agenda 2030, and now, the COVID-19 response policies.

Notwithstanding, our world has changed significantly since last year. The opportunities presented by the current pandemic must be exploited to aid us in doing things differently, to rebuild better, stronger and more resilient.

Madame President

In order to successfully achieve "*Accelerated action and transformative pathways*", we must retool how we think and how we do business. If we are to achieve a "*decade of action and delivery for sustainable development*" then we must all make good on our commitments and promises to ensure that no country is left behind. The Agenda 2030 still holds significant promise, but COVID-19 has shown us that we must improve on our efforts, not only incrementally, but also exponentially.

Guyana underscores that, for small developing countries like ours, partnerships are essential to achieving the SDG's. We subscribe to the principles of multilateralism, unity and solidarity and urges that now is the time to demonstrate our collective commitment to achieving the SDG's by crafting a path forward with these fundamental principles as its cornerstone.

I take this opportunity to commend the work of the Council for convening successive and productive HLPFs, an important springboard from which to launch transformative actions. I trust my message today resounds with all as we chart the course for and embark on the *Decade of Action and Delivery*.

I thank you.