



Statement by H.E. Mr. Lasha Darsalia, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of Georgia

High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development: “Accelerated action and transformative pathways: realizing the decade of action and delivery for sustainable development”

Ministerial meeting of the HLPF, convened under the auspices of the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC)

General Debate

Madam President,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Distinguished delegates,

I would like to begin by expressing my sincerest appreciation and gratitude to everyone, whose invaluable inputs made the High-Level Political Forum 2020 a reality in light of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.

Last September, at the SDG Summit we pledged to “make the coming decade one of action and delivery” for people and the planet. However, with just 10 years left to end poverty and hunger, tackle climate change and reduce inequalities, new challenges have been imposed by the pandemic that threaten to undermine progress on all SDGs and achieve the sustainable world as promised.

The UN Secretary General, Antonio Guterres stated, “we need to turn the recovery into a real opportunity to do things right for the future.” Let us endeavor to get the world back on track and chart a new path to the peaceful, prosperous and sustainable future where no one is left behind.

Madam President,

The Government of Georgia has been putting efforts to accelerate the progress towards achieving the SDGs. Four years have passed since the submission of the 1st National Voluntary Review (VNR) in 2016. As a further illustration of Georgia’s strong commitment to achieve sustainable development, we presented the 2nd VNR this year and once again reaffirmed our aspiration to enhance the 2030 Agenda.

In November 2019, the Government adopted the Sustainable Development Goals National Document that equally addresses the three dimensions of sustainable development – economic, social and environmental; describes the nationalized

17 goals, 93 targets and 200 indicators and sets out the institutional and procedural structure for monitoring their implementation. The electronic monitoring, which supports the distribution of up-to-date information about the performance of public agencies on subsequently all relevant targets of the SDGs, has been launched since January 2020.

Excellences,

The Coronavirus pandemic has already caused unimaginably devastating impact on societies, economies and vulnerable groups. Since the beginning of the crisis, the Government of Georgia undertook proactive and rapid measures to contain the large-scale spread of the COVID-19 and to ensure that no one is left behind during this hardship. In this regard, we are pleased to note that so far, Georgia remains as a one of the safest countries in Europe.

In recent years, Georgia has achieved tangible socio-economic progress and was moved from lower to upper-middle income countries by the World Bank classification. However, the current outbreak has caused profound and lasting economic and social consequences for the country. The anti-crisis plan presented by the Government in April 2020 covers almost all sectors of the Georgian economy and represents a core relief package for the private sector and for the citizens that have faced the negative impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Distinguished colleagues,

In the times of pandemic, strong, transparent, and accountable state institutions have proved to be a key in shaping the COVID-19 response. We believe that none of the SDGs can be fully accomplished without Peaceful, Just and Inclusive Societies. In this regard, the Government of Georgia pays special attention to the implementation of the Goal 16 at the national and international levels. Public administration reform in recent years has increased effectiveness, openness, and accountability of state institutions in the country. Georgia was ranked among the top 5 performers in open budget index since 2017 (Open budget survey). Due to the fundamental reforms carried out to eliminate the corruption, resulted in Georgia being as a leader with one of the lowest corruption levels.

Madam President,

We consider the inclusive and quality education for all as a driver for the achievement of all 17 SDGs. In this regard, education and science systems have undergone significant reforms in recent years. 1.5 billion learners worldwide have been affected by negative consequences of the pandemic, leaving the most vulnerable behind. In order to ensure undisrupted teaching and learning process, the Government adapted its education system to remote learning format at different levels of education in Georgia. "Teleskola" Project, broadcasted TV lessons for pupils of all grades in different subjects and guaranteed access for everyone, regardless of having the Internet access. In order not to leave anyone behind, the students without the access to distance learning process were identified and provided with the Internet and relevant equipment.

Madam President,

Regrettably, Coronavirus forced the postponement of the most important round of talks since the global Paris Agreement - the COP26 meeting. The climate crisis has not disappeared with the pandemic and requires bold steps to take in this direction. To underpin the Paris Agreement with concrete actions, Georgia updated NDC, which currently is in the process of consultations. Georgia also developed the draft version of the "Climate Action Plan 2021-2030" (CAP). In January 2020, Georgia established the Climate Change Council with an aim to upscale climate governance in the country and underpin the implementation of the Paris Agreement.

Distinguished delegates,

Russia's continued violations of norms and principles of international law, UN charter, the EU-mediated 2008 Ceasefire Agreement, occupation of the Georgia's two integral regions – Abkhazia and Tskhinvali region/South Ossetia, the illegal process of so-called borderization, closure of the so-called "crossing points", killings, illegal detentions, kidnappings of local residents further aggravate already dire security and human rights situation on the ground and *inter alia* prevent the Government from the possibility to implement the SDGs therein.

Madam President,

While leveraging this moment of crisis, let me once again reiterate Georgia's readiness to take bold and coordinated steps to do its part to reach the sustainable world outlined in the 2030 Agenda.

I thank you!