

Statement by the Delegation of the Islamic Republic of Iran

On the occasion of the

2020 High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development

organized under the auspices of the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC)

7-17 July 2020

In the Name of Allah, the Compassionate, the Merciful

Madam President,

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

At the outset, we would like to extend our deepest condolences and sympathies to the families of those who have lost their beloved ones due to the COVID-19 pandemic and also wish any affected individuals a speedy and full recovery.

Madam President,

As we address this year's HLPF theme of "Accelerated action and transformative pathways: realizing the decade of action and delivery for sustainable development", we agree with the Secretary General in his opening remarks to the Ministerial Segment of the HLPF that "at a time when we desperately need to leap ahead, COVID-19 could set us back years and even decades, leaving countries with massive fiscal and growth challenges" and that "the awakening provided by the current crisis could be a chance to create an inclusive, networked, and effective multilateralism"

There are many lessons to be learned from the pandemic; two of them, however, are outstanding. First, all countries, regardless of their economy or military might as well as their population or territorial size, are deeply vulnerable to the unforeseen crises hitting unexpectedly. As a result, hard-won economic gains could vanish in a very short period of time. Second, for good or for bad, we are heavily dependent on each other as we continue to move forward together during this crisis. No one is immune from disasters such as this pandemic, and countries can overcome them only through working together.

Building on these lessons, we are of the view that our endeavors to realize sustainable development, international cooperation and solidarity continue to be fundamental. International cooperation as one of the key enablers towards development is central in supporting a nation's efforts to thrive and prosper. However, it sounds alarming that the unjust, self-serving and unilateral approaches adopted by a few are undermining and threatening multilateralism when it is most needed.

Madam President,

In stark defiance of the U.N. Charter as well as the principles of international law stands the imposition of Unilateral Coercive Measures. Such measures are an open assault to multilateralism and to the efforts for realization of sustainable development goals. They are designed and executed to deny nations of their inherent human rights, deprive governments of means essential for achieving sustainable development and hinder international cooperation as well as friendly relations among nations. Currently, as this unprecedented global public health crisis continues to ravage communities throughout the world, the UCMs, including measures in the form of illegal extraterritorial sanctions, are basically paralyzing national healthcare systems and infringing the ability of the affected governments in delivering the essential requirements needed to respond to the consequences of the pandemic in order to both save people and ensure healthy lives for all as contained in Goal 3 of the Agenda. Therefore, as long as illegal unilateral sanctions continue to be enforced around the world, tens of millions will be left behind. This clearly defies the promise we made in the Agenda.

While the world faces the COVID-19 pandemic as a grave global health crisis, our people are subjected to the most brutal form of "health and economic terrorism". The U.S. Administration is weaponizing COVID-19 by utilizing its unlawful sanctions against innocent people who are in immediate need of medical assistance.

The Unilateral Coercive Measures imposed by the U.S. have restricted Iranians' access to health and vital medicines. They are apparently hampering the realization of the SDGs in Iran. The adverse consequences of such measures are far-reaching and severe, especially in the context of the current trying situation affecting all human rights, in particular the right to life. In this sense, the

continuation of these measures is simply criminal. In fact, my country is now fighting on two fronts. First, it is fighting the COVID-19 outbreak, and secondly, it is fighting against the U.S.' economic and health terrorism. The latter adversely affects Iran's ability in the former.

It is undeniable that imposing and intensifying illegitimate measures and illegal sanctions that can only be labeled as acts of economic and health terrorism specifically during this pandemic have led to the consequent death and morbidity of innocent civilians due to the lack of access to medicine and medical facilities.

The U.S.' denial of Iran's access to the IMF resources to fight against the COVID-19 pandemic is yet another revealing example about its true face and nature.

The Islamic Republic of Iran deems the immediate removal of such unlawful measures essential for the implementation of the Agenda for Sustainable Development. In fact, the Agenda itself strongly urges all States to refrain from promulgating and applying any unilateral economic, financial or trade measures that impede the full achievement of economic and social development, particularly in developing countries.

Madam President,

Iran, given its geographical location and being prone to natural disasters, has encountered, on one hand, challenges such as flood, land degradation, desertification, sand and dust storms, water scarcity and hotter climate conditions. On the other hand, Iran has grappled with the threat of unilateral coercive measures as well as foreign-sponsored terrorism and extremist violence. The result is that often, instead of focusing on ways to reverse poverty, environmental destruction and development impediments, governments are obliged to commit their limited national resources to fighting insecurity.

Despite all restraints, including the ones culminating from the U.S.' unjustifiable, unilateral withdrawal from the JCPOA - which is a true achievement of multilateral diplomacy - and the imposition of its illegal sanctions, the Islamic Republic of Iran, while being deprived of the projected benefits of the Plan, is geared to scale up efforts to build a more prosperous and sustainable future for its people and contribute to the best of its ability, to multilateral diplomacy and

to a world free of poverty, hunger, ignorance, disease and ecological imbalances.

Iran has also achieved a great deal towards meeting the goals of sustainable development. For instance, on education, ending illiteracy and providing universal free public education up to secondary school has approached its full realization. The paramount significance attached to education has resulted in an average of 15% of household expenditure being spent on education at all levels. As a result, the literacy rate is currently above 97% of the population. It is also worth noting that around 400,000 Afghan students, regardless of their status, have been registered in Iranian schools.

Pertaining to women and their participation in social as well as economic sectors, currently, 27% of faculty members, more than 50% of college students, and almost 37% of medical doctors are women. At the decision-making level, there has been a 60% increase in women's appointments, and based on that, the goal previously set for 2020 dedicating 30% of national decision-making positions to women is now going to be realized.

As far as climate change mitigation and adaptation is concerned, Iran, following its "Comprehensive Low-Carbon Plan" aimed at energy efficiency and emission reduction, moved towards its intended mitigation of greenhouse gas emission at a rate 4% lower than BAU (Business as Usual).

On water, currently, 99% of the urban population and 93% of the rural population in Iran have access to safe drinking water.

Madam President,

We would like to conclude by calling for support to multilateralism and multilateral solutions to promote economic prosperity and sustainable development. In these critical moments, more than ever, a renewed commitment to multilateralism and global cooperation is needed. Only together can we stand against global threats such as COVID-19. Only together can we realize the promise which we jointly made to leave no one behind. It can be achieved should we take the lessons given by the Covid-19 outbreak serious.

Thank you