



Statement by LI Yong, UNIDO Director General  
at the High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development 2020

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Excellencies,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am pleased that this session of the HLPF brings us together to accelerate the realization of the Decade of Action and Delivery for sustainable development. The format of this session is different but the topic more relevant than ever before.

COVID-19 has not only caused widespread loss of life and human suffering, it has also affected economies and the livelihoods of people in every part of the world.

Working together in unity, the international community needs to halt the unfortunate and unexpected reversal of decades of development progress.

We need to stop the deterioration of human development, when we address the health crisis and its socio-economic consequences. We need to make best use of new opportunities to transform and to build back better.

During these unprecedented times of COVID, and as we recover from the crisis, inclusive and sustainable industrial development plays a central role and must remain as the economy's engine of growth.

Today, we all know how important industries are: first, they provide essential goods, food products, medical and pharmaceutical products amongst others. Second, the manufacturing sector and related service industries provide jobs and generate incomes. Industry is also a key source of innovation and advances in technology.

To accelerate action towards our agreed goals of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, we need to make sure that inclusive and sustainable industrial development is part of the global response.

Recovery packages need to drive more resource-efficient and circular economies, industrial policies that are gender-responsive, as well as innovation and investments in digitization, science and technology. We need to seize opportunities that create positive synergies with other critical socio-economic sectors.

We stand at a turning point, where governments and policymakers need to prioritize reforms based on lessons learned. A business-as-usual recovery would be an enormous missed opportunity.

Building back better does not have to be a choice between economic recovery and environmental sustainability.

The stimulus packages, primarily designed to revive economies, can be allocated to sustainable energy investments, circular economy models, resource-efficient and cleaner production, while creating new skilled jobs and income at the same time.

As containment measures disrupted supply chains and trade, tempting industrialized countries to move back manufacturing, we need to ensure that developing and middle-income countries remain well integrated in the global economy.

I am therefore pleased that this session of the HLPF will lead to new insights on how we can build back better and create more inclusive, sustainable and resilient societies and economies.

Thank you.