

High-Level Political Forum

How do we revamp and transform consumption and production and address and mitigate climate change?

(SDGs 12, 13, 17 and interlinkages among those goals and with other SDGs)

Wednesday 7 July 2021, 20:00 – 22:00 (Lisbon time)

Statement as Ministerial Respondent by

Special Envoy for Climate of Portugal,

Mr. Alexandre Leitão

“Excellencies,

distinguished ECOSOC Vice President,

*And Minister for Climate Change and Special Assistant to the Prime Minister,
Mr. Malik Aslam,*

distinguished panelists and delegates,

ladies and gentlemen,

If there is one lesson we can draw from this session is that the environmental crisis [consisting of interconnected phenomena of climate change, biodiversity nature loss, land degradation and pollution], needs to be tackled in an integrated manner. There is an urgent need to reverse the current environmental decline and we need to act now. The deteriorating state of the planet undermines efforts to fight poverty and inequality as well as achievement of healthy lives and well-being for all. A sustainable recovery needs to be at the core of building back better from the COVID-19 pandemic along a green, circular resilient and just pathway.

Excellencies,

Our challenge is to find ways to tackle the current crises [environmental, health and socio-economic], without compromising on the transformative approach enshrined in the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals. Based on our national experience, allow me to share a few areas and best practices where Portugal is focusing, bearing in mind the undeniable synergies between the SDGs 12 and 13.

[SDG 12 Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns]

Portugal is working simultaneously on three strategic pillars: i) de-carbonizing society (focusing on climate, energy efficiency, sustainable mobility); ii) stepping up the circular economy, (focusing on dematerialization, collaborative and sustainable consumption); and iii) the territory (spatial planning and coastal water management).

In order to change patterns of production and consumption, optimizing production factors, increasing efficiency and reducing costs, Portugal has designed various instruments and policies, such as the National Waste Management Plan, the National Strategy for Environmentally Responsible Public Purchasing and the National Strategy for Environmental Education.

[SDG 13 Taking current action to combat climate change and its impacts]

At the same time, Portugal has been reducing the Carbon intensity in the economy choosing renewable energies. As a result, the goals of the Kyoto Agreement were achieved in 2012. We have witnessed, between 2015 and 2019, a decrease by 26% of GHG emissions. And between 2015 and 2020 we registered an increase of the production of renewable energy by 18.2%, covering 57% of electricity production.

Aiming to achieve carbon neutrality by 2050, Portugal foresees decommissioning coal-fired power stations by the end of this year, 2021. These actions are crucial to build back better and greener especially after this pandemic crisis.

Also, Portugal advocates ambitious international patterns for biodiversity at several levels: measurable targets (?), financial means, and monitoring mechanisms. Of course we fully subscribe to the EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2030, within which we committed to protect 30% of our land area and 30% of our sea area until the end of the decade.

It was under the Portuguese Presidency that the Council of the European Union endorsed the new EU Adaptation Strategy, which will be instrumental to make the European Union more climate resilient, and for the EU to step up international action on adaptation.

Excellencies,

[SDG 17 Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the Global Partnership for sustainable development]

In the context of the COVID-19 pandemic and its socio-economic impact, Portugal recognizes the significant gap between needs, available public means and the efforts needed to 'build back better and greener'. Portugal remains therefore committed to strengthen the effectiveness and impact of our development cooperation, where new and innovative partnerships have a central role to play to achieve the SDGs.

That is why the new Portuguese Cooperation Strategy for the period 2021-2030 is designed in line with the 2030 Agenda. It is important to continue investing in new partnerships, optimizing the existing ones, taking full advantage of financing opportunities available in European and international financial institutions, involving also the private sector in these efforts. The new generation of Strategic Cooperation Programmes therefore calls for an alignment with the SDGs through a mapping by sector of activity that will allow Portugal and its partner countries a more detailed monitoring of the contribution of their activities for the implementation of the SDGs.

Excellencies,

The crisis caused by the pandemic should not be an excuse to interrupt policies, but rather an opportunity to reaffirm our commitments, including implementing the SDGs. As we continue to learn how to strengthen international, regional, national and local strategies to recover, let me invite you to participate in the 2nd UN Ocean Conference, which will take place in Lisbon in 2022, another opportunity to accelerate the collective implementation of the 2030 Agenda.