

Transcript of Video Message by Minister Malik Amin Aslam

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen

Asalam-o-Alaikum

I would like to, first of all, thank the ECOSOC forum for organising this high-level forum on the SDGs. We are all living through very challenging times in the Covid era. Collectively, the world has been taught two very important lessons.

The first lesson is that we cannot fight with nature. It is not a fight we can win and there is no choice for the world but to live in harmony with nature. Because we have seen that when we try to push the thresholds of nature which we are doing with zoonotic diseases, with climate change, with biodiversity loss, nature reacts and mankind cannot adapt to that kind of reaction.

The second lesson is that there is a better way possible, for all of us, and there is a better pathway possible which is low carbon, which is in balance and in harmony with nature. I think that is the path that we all need to take and this path has been defined through the SDGs and gives a clear direction till 2030. Pakistan remains committed to this pathway and it has already framed its national policies and development pathway to be aligned with the SDGs and with the nature positive pathway.

In this regard, during the covid era we announced what is called the Green Stimulus which was focused on two things: one was nature protection and the other was delivering jobs to the people. We did it in three manners. We had a very big project of planting trees called the Ten Billion Tree Tsunami which was creating a lot of jobs. We had the Protected Areas Initiative to expand our protected areas and to make sure that we also give green jobs. The third is Recharge Pakistan which is again an area in which we are trying to utilize our flood water, which is wasted every year, to re-energize our wetlands and also recharge our ground water systems while creating jobs at the same time. All three are nature-based solutions and are aligned with SDGs. The SDGs 6, 11, 12, 13 and 17, all are encompassed in these.

In addition to these initiatives, we are also focusing in expanding our renewable energy systems in Pakistan and have a clear target of switching to 60% clean energy by 2030. Similarly, on the electric vehicle transition, we have announced a new policy. We are now focused on transitioning towards 30% electric vehicles by 2030. We are establishing a Green Building Code to make sure that our housing sector, which is booming in Pakistan at the moment, follows a green pathway. At the same time, we are also focused on trying to ban plastics in Pakistan. We have already come out with a very strict legislation for the Capital city and we are expanding it to all the provinces to make sure that we get out of the plastic addiction that the world is engaged in and Pakistan, unfortunately, is also addicted to plastic which we need to get out of.

So, all of these activities are focused on making Pakistan push towards a sustainable development pathway and above all of these, what we have done is called the Clean Green Pakistan Index which is engaging 80 cities of Pakistan to make sure that all these nature-based solutions as well as Green Code and Clean Energy Solutions are encompassed in such a manner that these cities can develop along a pathway in which they are meeting all those goals. We have downloaded the SDGs into further quantifiable targets for all these cities. There are 35 targets that we have quantified which encompass nature-based solutions, clean energy and sustainable consumption and production.

Pakistan remains committed to this pathway and we were happily surprised last year when one of the independent auditors of the SDGs gave Pakistan thumbs up on SDG 13 by stating that we have met the SDG 13 goals ten years ahead of time. We are committed to all the SDGs and to a nature positive pathway because we feel that there is no better pathway than this one for the world to take.

Thank you very much.