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AFFAIRS**

Opening Remarks

**Vision and priorities of civil society, the private sector and other major
groups and stakeholders: realizing the SDGs during the COVID-19
recovery**

Friday, 9 July, 3:00pm – 5:00pm

Excellencies,
Distinguished delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is an honour for me to join you at today's session, which has become part of a tradition for Major Groups and other stakeholders to share their views and debate on the theme of the HLPF.

Major groups and other stakeholders are critical actors in advocating for the implementation of the SDGs. In holding governments to account on their commitments and in advising on public policies and actions, you play an important role in ensuring that no one is left behind, especially at the local and grassroots level.

This session brings added value to the wider deliberations in this year's HLPF, as we examine the systemic and political obstacles that are hindering global recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic and seek ways to strengthen international solidarity.

The virtual nature of this meeting is a reminder that the COVID-19 pandemic continues to affect the lives of people around the world. While the pandemic appears to be under control in some countries in Europe, North America and East Asia, it continues to devastate communities in many developing countries in the global south.

This session is also a moment to reflect on the needs of those vulnerable and marginalised groups, who were isolated even before the pandemic and were hit the hardest when it struck.

UN DESA's recent survey of stakeholders and publication on the "Impact of COVID-19 on Stakeholder Engagement for the SDGs", revealed that you, the stakeholders, see that the pandemic is setting back progress on the SDGs for *all* vulnerable and marginalised groups, but especially older people, homeless and slum dwellers, migrants, women and girls, and people

with disabilities. These groups should be at the heart of a people-centred response and recovery from COVID-19.

The global pandemic has demonstrated that the only way to realise the SDGs during the COVID-19 recovery is through collaborative action - a whole-of-society approach. Governments and representatives of the major groups and other stakeholders need to work together to ensure a better recovery.

Colleagues,
Ladies and gentlemen,

Our recent UN DESA publication, on “Partnerships in response to COVID-19” highlighted the importance of multi-stakeholder partnerships for driving the global response to the COVID-19 pandemic. The pandemic brought urgency to the need for greater flexibility in the mobilization of resources and pooling of efforts to ensure quick, quality results.

Across the 36 multi-stakeholder partnerships analysed in this study, six factors stood out as drivers of success:

First, forward planning around the needs, potential partners, and the steps needed to put the partnership into action.

Second, trust among partners was critical, and tended to be built through previous collaboration.

Third, alignment of interests and a shared vision. Partners needed a shared perspective of what they were trying to accomplish, the value they were adding, and the roles each would play in reaching that end.

Fourth, partners needed to be flexible and responsive to changes in the operating environment and the needs of the partnership.

Fifth, successful partnerships showed a high level of commitment to achieving the collective goals agreed for the partnership.

Sixth, a clear governance structure and effective leadership were critical for coordinating the relations and activities between partners through time.

I look forward to learning more from you on how we can nurture meaningful partnerships for moving the SDGs forward.

Colleagues,
Ladies and gentlemen,

The format of this session demonstrates the rapid acceleration of digital engagement brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic.

The advent of online participation may have increased levels of engagement for many, but not for all. Online participation has created a new set of technological, financial, and accessibility

challenges for groups of vulnerable and marginalised people. particularly for older people, persons with disabilities, rural dwellers, and children and youth.

As USG of DESA, I am particularly concerned about the potential impact that this will have on the participation of major groups and other stakeholders in policy dialogues and consultations at national and international levels. We want to preserve your engagement in the HLPF. And we want you to contribute to the Voluntary National Reviews. Many VNR reports highlight that civil society was consulted through virtual means and that is welcome. We want to ensure that disparities in digital connectivity do not become a pretext for exclusion and the limiting of civic space.

We look forward to the insights that you will share today on your vision of stakeholder engagement for delivering on the SDGs. We want to ensure that you have the space you need to contribute and add value as we work together to mount effective and transformative responses to the COVID-19 pandemic, that leave no one behind.

Thank you very much and I wish you a successful session.