



REPÚBLICA
PORTUGUESA

GABINETE DO SECRETÁRIO DE ESTADO
DOS NEGÓCIOS ESTRANGEIROS E
COOPERAÇÃO

High-Level Political Forum

How do we get on track for building more peaceful, equal and inclusive societies? (SDGs 3, 10, 16, 17 and interlinkages among those goals and with other SDGs)

Thursday 8 July 2021, 14:00 - 15:15 (Lisbon time)

**Statement as Ministerial Respondent by
Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs and Cooperation of
Portugal, Mr. Francisco André**

Your Excellencies,

ECOSOC Vice President and Permanent
Representative of Botswana, Mr. Collen Vixen
Kelapile,

Director-General of the International Development
Law Organization, Ms. Jan Beagle,

Distinguished panelists and delegates,

Ladies and gentlemen,



It is my great pleasure and privilege to participate, for the first time, in the High-Level Political Forum for Sustainable Development on behalf of Portugal. It is the second time the HLPF takes place in virtual format, meaning that COVID-19 continues to impact the life of all of us.

As we have listened in this session, we all agree that the pandemic has already had a very significant impact in a number of areas, unfortunately undermining decades of development efforts.

COVID-19 has exposed and exacerbated world's vulnerabilities and inequalities within and among countries, emphasizing systemic weaknesses, challenges and risks, and threatening to halt or obliterate progress made in realizing the Sustainable Development Goals.

However, let's be honest: even before the pandemic, by early 2020, the world was not on track to meet its 2030 targets.



COVID-19 has been a disrupter of healthcare, and other social and economic systems. Besides the negative impact on SDG 3 “Good Health and Well-Being”, COVID-19 and the extraordinary measures taken by governments negatively impacted the work that has been done to end poverty (SDG 1), to reduce inequalities (SDG 10), in particular gender inequalities (SDG 5).

The pandemic has also exposed discrimination and has weakened and even led to shattered rights and protection systems in various countries (SDG 16).

At the same time, the pandemic has put the spotlight on the crucial role of global partnerships and multilateralism.

Thereby, the challenges posed by the COVID-19 crisis make it no longer a choice, but a necessity to accelerate innovative and decisive joint action to realize SDGs.



We urgently need a renewed global commitment to sustainable development through solidarity, international cooperation, and multilateralism.

Excellencies,

Based on our national experience, allow me to highlight a few strands of work where we need to focus our efforts aiming to get on track for building more peaceful, equal, and inclusive societies.

The pandemic has reminded us how interdependent are human health, animal health and the environment. Therefore, Portugal emphasizes the value of the “**One Health**” approach.

Today, health is on the top of the global agenda. Let’s benefit from this momentum and take concrete and coordinated actions to tackle health challenges in a holistic manner with all sectors involved.



This is crucial to accelerate SDGs' implementation and to enhance interlinkages between SDG 3 and other Goals.

Portugal has made significant progress in terms of improving the population's health and well-being. Consequently, the response to the challenges posed to reach and progress efficiently in **SDG 3** also present positively significant results.

During the pandemic, all patients with COVID-19 were exempt from paying user fees, both in the diagnosis and treatments. We have also paid special attention to mental health, reinforcing its intrinsic connection with human rights.

Besides, Portugal has decided to extend the access to the National Health Service to all migrants and refugees, regardless of their status, under the same conditions as national citizens, contributing also to **SDG 10**. We have also granted temporary extension of documents and visas to enable migrants to stay in our country.



In line with the 2030 Agenda principle of Leaving No One Behind, Portugal emphasizes that migrants are key actors in sustainable development and must be considered in all efforts to implement the SDGs.

At a time when tens of thousands of people continued to leave their homes and embark on dangerous journeys, despite COVID-19 and mobility restrictions, and when by mid-2020 the number of refugees had grown to 24 million, the highest absolute number on record, we continue to promote a positive approach and to stress the importance of solidarity in the context of migration policies.

In this context, Portugal has organized together with Ecuador a side event on the ECOSOC Humanitarian Affairs Segment, last June, about “Fully Protecting All - ensuring access to COVID-19 vaccines for people on the move”.



Moreover, Portugal co-organized two side events on migration during this HLPF:

- the side event "*Leaving No One Behind during and after the COVID-19 pandemic: turning the concept into action*", with the “Club de Madrid”; and also
- the side event “Advancing the implementation of the Global Compact for Migration”, with the Philippines.

The promotion of safe, regular and orderly labor mobility is a priority area for our country. In this context, our geographical and historical links are important in deepening partnerships with migrants' countries of origin.

Strongly committed to the social dimension, most of our measures regarding COVID-19 were taken with a special lens on the **gender dimension**. The pandemic and its socio-economic consequences have had disproportionate impacts on women and girls, including domestic violence.



On behalf of the Presidency of the Council of the European Union, during the first Semester of this year, Portugal hosted and chaired the **Porto Social Summit**, an important moment that marked the European agenda for the next decade, ensuring that we face present and future challenges without leaving no one behind.

The signing of the Social Commitment is an important joint effort to consolidate the commitment already made with the European Pillar of Social Rights and create the synergies for an inclusive, sustainable, fair and job-creating recovery.

Portugal also continues to work to promote the efficiency of the justice system, thus ensuring access to justice to all. Besides investment on digitalization, Portugal is working on establishing a coherent and robust anti-corruption framework and on promoting non-discriminatory laws, concretely with the new national plan to fight racism and discrimination (2021-2025).



Our internal efforts go hand in hand with our external dimension. 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. **(SDG17)**

Excellencies,

The pandemic did not stop our efforts towards the 2030 Agenda. On the contrary. We have managed to reduce its impact and to implement measures allowing us to recover and to build back a more peaceful, equal and inclusive society.

Therefore, allow me to invite you to continue your efforts to build back better while keep accelerating efforts in this Decade of Action to deliver the Sustainable Development Goals.

Thank you!