Mr. President,
Mr. Secretary General,
Excellencies, Ladies and gentlemen,

**Thank you** for the invitation to speak to you here today.

The fact that we are able to meet *in person*, even in this slightly restricted format, is very **encouraging**.

I was asked to share with you **Austria’s experience**

with one of the biggest challenges in recent history, the **COVID-19 pandemic**.

As you know and as many speakers pointed out over the last days,

the **global impact** of the pandemic has been dramatic:
• For the first time in the last 30 years, we saw a reversal in global human development.
• 120 million people fell into extreme poverty.
• More than 250 million jobs were lost.

The challenges we face are extraordinary.

We see positive developments on global economic growth for some states,

but many countries are at risk of being left behind if we do not take the right steps today.

One thing is clear: we have to work together and we have to support each other.

We must learn from one another and share best practices.

Let me briefly outline three of the most important lessons we have learned in Austria during our COVID response:
Firstly, tests have been key to stop the spread of the virus.

Without testing, there is no data. And without data, you cannot react in real-time and focus efforts on where they are most needed.

We learned this early and quickly expanded our testing capacities and we introduced so-called “entry tests”.

So when we re-opened schools, for example, we introduced easy self-tests for students of all age groups 2 to 3 times a week.

Today, Austria figures among the countries with the highest rate of COVID-tests per capita worldwide,

with about 2 million tests per week on a population of less than 9 million.
Secondly, while the pandemic is a fight for each human life, it is also a fight for **survival for small and medium companies**.

We immediately started programs to **mitigate the social and economic fallout**.

A special form of “**short-time work**” policy enabled companies to reduce the amount of paid hours worked,

while employees received direct income support from the government.

Since the start of the pandemic, this policy **saved over 1 million jobs**.

Thirdly, we also realized during the pandemic that we needed to **get better in the field of digitalization**.

We therefore increased our support in this area and we will invest 1.4 billion Euro in **our broadband** infrastructure for **companies, public administration and schools**, 

with the **goal** to provide nation-wide broadband coverage by 2030.

And we also launched an **investment premium** for companies with a special focus on digitalization.
In addition to the lessons we have learned in Austria,

I would like to stress one point that I believe we’ve all experienced
during this pandemic, namely the value of international cooperation
and solidarity.

Mr Secretary General,

over the past year, you often underlined that we must counter this
pandemic together and I fully agree.

As part of Team Europe, Austria counts among the lead contributors to
COVAX.

Earlier this year, we pioneered by coordinating the transfer of more
than 600,000 vaccines to the Western Balkan States out of the EU
Vaccine Sharing mechanism.

In addition, Austria will provide another 1 million vaccine doses to our
neighbours in the Western Balkans.
Ladies and gentlemen,

The COVID-19 pandemic hit all of us hard,

but it also shed light on global weaknesses and inequalities.

At the same time, the international community swiftly mobilized to respond.

I applaud all actors across the UN system who have teamed up to enable this response and have been in the front line in the most affected places.

Let me thank these brave men and women through you, Mr Secretary General, for their commitment and their hard work.

As host to one of the UN headquarters, we have tried our best to ensure that UN staff and their families in Vienna remain safe and healthy throughout this pandemic.

Ladies and gentlemen,

To recover better and greener from the crisis, we need to adapt our policies.
We need solutions that build a world that is more sustainable, inclusive, just, equal and resilient.

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Paris Agreement on Climate Change remain our roadmap to achieve this goal.

They will help us emerge from this crisis even stronger.

Within the EU, the European Green Deal is our sustainable growth strategy. With this, the EU aims to achieve climate neutrality by 2050.

Mr Secretary General,

In the COVID-19 response, the role of partnerships and the value of the UN as a global forum have been essential.

It is our joint responsibility as international community to support the most vulnerable regions of the world and to “leave no-one behind”.

Austria will continue to stand side-by-side with partners in need, including the least developed countries,

the landlocked developing countries and

the small island developing states.
Mr President,

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development will be our joint compass to build forward better from the COVID crisis.

Austria presented its first Voluntary National Review of the implementation of the SDGs last year.

In the recently published Sustainable Development Report 2021, Austria was once again ranked among the top ten countries.

We are proud to see our efforts recognized internationally and we remain committed to continuing on this path.

Our ECOSOC Membership will also reflect our firm commitment to our Global Goals as outlined in the 2030 Agenda.

We look forward to close cooperation with our partners in this crucial area of UN work to overcome the socio-economic impacts of the pandemic.
Dear colleagues,

The Covid crisis showed us many areas where we need to get **better**.

However, the pandemic also **brought out the best in us:**

- Health workers and other essential frontline workers across the globe risked their lives to **keep others safe**.
- Global scientific cooperation made it possible to **develop vaccines in record time**.
- **Multilateral mechanisms** were created to help countries **in need of vaccines**.

Much more needs to be done, but these examples give hope that we can **overcome this crisis together and get back to normality**.

Let us **build on this hope** and **turn it into momentum**.

Let us apply the **same determination in the remaining years until 2030**.

**Austria** stands ready to do **its share** during this **crucial Decade of Action**.

Thank you.