

High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development

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Statement by

**Rita Schwarzelühr-Sutter, Vice-Minister for the Environment, Nature
Conservation and Nuclear Safety, Germany, and**

**Maria Flachsbarth, Vice-Minister for Economic Cooperation and
Development, Germany**

For the second year in a row, we come together at the HLPF amidst the ongoing humanitarian and socio-economic COVID-19 crisis. While decisive action by many governments and stakeholders worldwide has helped to avoid the worst outcomes and is contributing to stemming the tide, the pandemic's effects and outfall remain disastrous in terms of quality and extent. So far according to official figures, it has cost over 4 million lives, impacted the health of millions as well as jeopardised the state of our economies and wellbeing of our societies. The pandemic has rolled back and continues to endanger much of the progress we managed to achieve thus far with respect to implementing the SDGs.

Combating the pandemic, saving lives, and protecting health are top priorities. But our response cannot stop there. Increased efforts towards sustainable development will make our societies more resilient to COVID-19 and future crises. Therefore, we unremittably need to recover better and greener by addressing growing inequalities and poverty as well as the destruction of nature and the climate crisis.

The German Government updated its Sustainable Development Strategy, which is aligned with the SDGs and constitutes the key instrument for strategically guiding and implementing sustainability in Germany, in March 2021. The Strategy specifies six transformation areas that are key to SDG implementation in, with and by Germany which are the basis for Germany's second Voluntary National Review (VNR) presented at this year's HLPF. The VNR emphasizes the assumption of global responsibility and solidarity as part of our comprehensive vision for a sustainable future.

It will be essential, over the coming months, to ensure at the international level that programmes and policies in response to the crisis become more socially, economically and ecologically sustainable. They should be designed to make our societies "future-proof" and our economies sustainable, climate-neutral and resilient, inclusive, just and competitive. The 2030 Agenda and its SDGs are our tools to get there. Instead of falling behind in their implementation, we must scale up our efforts in order to confront the manifold challenges currently afflicting many countries. Research and innovation will play an important role in driving progress towards that objective. As the world's second largest bilateral provider of ODA, we are committed to the global partnership for sustainable development.

The transformation to sustainable development can only be achieved by also respecting human rights in all economic activities as well as social, labour and environmental standards, taking into account appropriate feasibility with regard to those standards. Through a smart mix of non-binding and binding measures, like our *Act on Corporate Due Diligence in Supply Chains* or our Guidelines on Deforestation-Free Supply Chains and the promotion of multi-stakeholder partnerships involving businesses, trade unions and civil society, Germany is fostering sustainable global value and supply chains on national, regional and international level.

Recovery policies also need to take the specific impact of the COVID-19 crisis on women and girls into account. Germany supports policies that work for faster progress to promote gender equality, including the EU's Gender Equality Strategy and its Gender Action Plan in External Action aimed at accelerating the empowerment of women and girls, and safeguarding gains made on gender equality over the past decades. Germany remains committed to the promotion and protection of sexual and reproductive health and rights.

In 2015, all governments achieved consensus

- to reach the goal of sustainable development in its three dimensions – economic, social and environmental – in a balanced and integrated manner;
- on a fast and fair transformation of our societies to sustainable development
- and on the decarbonization of our economies.

During the last years, the urgency to act on climate change and build a more sustainable world has further intensified and continues to demand decisive and immediate action. The COVID-19 crisis has shown that human, animal and environmental health are closely intertwined. That is why the German Government promotes the "One Health" approach at the national, regional and international levels giving us additional reason to champion protecting the health of farm and wild animals as well as biodiversity and natural habitats.

In order to effectively mitigate or even prevent health crises and to ensure the best possible health for all, Germany is committed to implementing lessons learned from the crisis and strengthen the multilateral Global Health architecture with WHO at its centre.

Healthy and resilient societies depend on social cohesion, inclusive and just economies and giving nature the space it needs. Yet, to date, action falls far short of what is needed to start on a sustainable development route that truly does justice to the interests of future generations. In its recent ruling on climate legislation in Germany, the Federal Constitutional Court highlighted the fundamental importance of intergenerational equity. On the basis of the court's decision and those by the European Council, the German Government revised the Federal Climate Change Act in June 2021, setting a stricter target for greenhouse gas emission reduction of at least 65% by 2030 compared with 1990 levels, instead of the previous 55%. Emissions from different parts of the economy are to be kept below sector-specific thresholds that will be lowered every year. Greenhouse gas emissions are to be cut by at least 88% by 2040, and greenhouse gas neutrality is to be achieved by 2045.

Germany is committed to sustainable development, including the reduction of poverty and inequalities as well as ambitious climate action and biodiversity protection at national, European and international level.

At this occasion, we would like to reiterate that the 2030 Agenda and its SDGs must be implemented not only *for*, but also *by* the whole of society. In order for that to happen, we need the voices of civil society, industry, science and the youth to be heard, especially in these extraordinary times and circumstances. Therefore, our National Sustainable Development Strategy as well as our VNR draw on contributions of societal groups in Germany.

Only together can we move forward and ensure that no one is left behind.

Thank you.