



**MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS
OF GREECE**

National Statement by Mr. Nikos Dendias

Minister of Foreign Affairs of Greece

The UN High Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development

6-15 July 2021

**Under the Auspices of the UN Economic and Social Council
(ECOSOC)**

We all recognize that the COVID-19 pandemic represents a serious setback for sustainable development around the world. It is important that the international community remains guided by the 2030 Agenda and its 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) as well as by other multilateral commitments, including the Addis Ababa Action Agenda on Financing for Development and the Paris Agreement on Climate Change.

Today more than ever, the implementation of the 2030 Agenda requires effective multilateralism, bringing global actors together. Greece remains a firm supporter of the rules-based international order with the UN at its core, rooted in respect for international law, including international human rights law and key relevant treaties, such as the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea. A strong multilateral system is required to address global challenges such as pandemics, climate change and the biodiversity crisis. The multilateral system must be supported to work effectively. The pandemic has increased the need for concerted action, global cooperation, peace and solidarity.

Greece recognizes that sustainable development cannot be realized without peace and security. We must continue to be engaged in the promotion of peace and to multilateral responses to crisis situations, always in line with the principles enshrined in the Charter of the UN. In this regard we support the UN Secretary-General's urgent appeal for a global ceasefire all over the world.

A comprehensive and collaborative response to the COVID-19 pandemic should be our priority, including strengthening

preparedness and resilience to better prepare for any future shocks. The collective response of the international community must be guided by human rights and the achievement of gender equality as a cross cutting priority. We should therefore be ready to step up our efforts to accelerate the implementation of the SDGs during this crucial Decade of Action.

COVID-19 crisis serves as wake-up call that accelerates a transformative action that delivers for societies and the planet. In the past year and a half, we have witnessed an immense community resilience, dynamic action from governments, expansion of social protection, an acceleration of digital transformation; and an international collaboration to develop life-saving vaccines in a very short time. A concerted effort is needed to ensure equitable access to COVID-19 vaccines and treatments and to embrace a recovery that is based on the 2030 Agenda. Our priority in responding to COVID-19 is to make vaccines available and affordable to all, treating them as a global public good. It is vital to prioritize vaccine distribution to the most vulnerable in order to prevent mutations and more resources to be devoted for the COVAX facility led by the World Health Organization (WHO).

Strengthening health systems and the international preparedness for – and response to – future pandemics should be a top priority for the international community. The pandemic has underlined the need to accelerate progress towards universal health coverage and universal access to infrastructure, especially digital infrastructure. This critical period of COVID-19 has made it very clear that countries equipped with effective social protection systems and universal health coverage are better equipped to respond to such crises.

Education and vocational training must be at the centre of this recovery, as key means to improve the employability prospects of the young generation.

To get the SDGs back on track, governments, business and industries have to use the recovery to adopt low-carbon, resilient and inclusive development pathways that will reduce carbon emissions, conserve natural resources and create better quality jobs. Tackling global poverty, inequalities, climate change, biodiversity-loss and environmental degradation are an integral part of recovery as well as ensuring better preparedness. We remain committed to ensuring sustainable consumption and production

patterns, including for a sustainable and resilient recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic.

With unemployment and inequalities within and across the countries rising as a result of the pandemic, focusing policy efforts on quality job creation, in particular in green sectors is essential in order to channel resources where they are most needed, including to the strengthening of welfare protection systems and measures. The social dimension of the recovery must include a fair and just transition as our efforts should focus on reaching the furthest behind first, in an inclusive way.

The pandemic has exacerbated the need for critical funding, leading to an urgent mobilization of international and domestic resources for investments in people and in infrastructure. Investment in quality, sustainable and resilient infrastructure is critical for building back better and greener.

In addition, Greece recognizes that climate change and biodiversity loss are posing existential threats to humanity. Global climate action still falls short of what is required to achieve the goals set in the Paris Agreement and the 2030 Agenda. Importantly, one of the UN Secretary-General's ten Priorities for 2021 is to make "Peace with Nature".

The SDGs are the roadmap that provides a sustainable and robust way forward. They also constitute the closest thing to a global strategy that 193 governments have agreed. The road to economic, social and environmental sustainability still passes through peace, justice, social cohesion, inclusion, digital solutions and decent work.