



High-Level Political Forum 2021

under the auspices of the Economic and Social Council

New York, 6-15 July 2021

General Statement by PORTUGAL

This year's High-Level Political Forum has been one of very hard findings. With the Decade of Action for the SDGs well under way, we are in the midst of an unprecedented crisis, which is erasing decades of progress and transforming the world as we knew it.

In some areas, we are moving farther away from the SDGs: the world is poorer, more unequal, more violent, especially for women and children, and collectively we are not doing enough to tackle the climate crisis.

We can and must turn this around. The challenges posed by the crisis make it no longer a choice, but a necessity to accelerate innovative and decisive joint action to realize the 2030 Agenda. Thus, we urgently need a renewed global commitment to sustainable development through solidarity, international cooperation and multilateralism.

*This spirit of solidarity has been also guiding our efforts internally. In addition to implementing measures to protect people's health, Portugal adopted several measures to protect the incomes of those who could not be working due to COVID-19, thus tackling poverty (**SDG 1**) through: the extraordinary and automatic prorogation of unemployment benefits, social unemployment benefits, and minimum income benefits; the maintenance, in 2021, of temporary measures to protect the most vulnerable groups of unemployed people; the protection of low-income pensioners and extraordinary increases in the lowest pensions in May 2020 and January 2021; and the adoption of measures to maintain employment.*

*These measures contribute directly to end hunger (**SDG 2**). Moreover the creation of the Food Security and Nutrition Council in Portugal (CONSANP) and the adoption of the National Strategy for Food Security and Nutrition (ENSAN-Portugal) showcase our commitment, both in the global context and in the context of the Community of Portuguese Speaking Countries (CPLP), to fulfil SDG 2.*

*The pandemic has reminded us of the interdependence between human, animal and environmental health, and thus of the "One Health" approach. Today Health is at the top of the global agenda. We should take advantage of this momentum to accelerate the implementation of **SDG 3** and to enhance interlinkages between SDG 3 and other Goals.*

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



borders, and as part of a continued commitment to vaccine equity, Portugal will provide at least 5% of all vaccines we acquire to our priority partner countries, with particular emphasis on Least Developed Countries and Small Island Developing States.

*The social dimension of Sustainable Development “cannot be left behind”, and therefore we must strive, in all policy areas, to reduce inequalities. Portugal has decided to extend access to the National Health Service to all migrants and refugees, regardless of their status, under the same conditions as national citizens, thus contributing to **SDG 3** and **SDG 10**. We have also granted a temporary extension of documents and visas to enable migrants to stay in our country.*

In line with the 2030 Agenda and guided by the 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. As a “Champion country” of the Global Compact for Migration, Portugal stands for a positive approach, stresses the importance of solidarity in the context of migration policies and is committed to promoting safe, regular and orderly labour mobility.

*Migrants were among the most vulnerable groups to the impacts of this crisis, but the economic downturn has had broader consequences. Therefore, Portugal has provided a broad-based support for firms, workers, and families that were affected by social distancing and restrictions to economic activity (**SGD 8**).*

*The pandemic and its socio-economic consequences have had disproportionate impacts on women and girls, including domestic violence. As such, the measures taken by Portugal to face COVID-19 took fully into account the gender dimension (**SDG 5**).*

*Portugal continues to work to promote the efficiency of the justice system, thus ensuring access to justice to all (**SDG 16**). 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).*

A sustainable, fair, inclusive and resilient recovery needs to be at the core of building back better from the COVID-19 pandemic. This is the challenge.

*In the environmental dimension, Portugal is working on three strategic pillars: de-carbonizing society, stepping up the circular economy and the bioeconomy, and enhancing land and coastal management (**SDG 13**). This will change patterns of production and consumption, optimizing production factors, increasing efficiency and reducing costs (**SDG 12**).*

At the same time, we are reducing the carbon intensity of our economy since 2005, through renewable energies. As a result, the goals of the Kyoto Agreement were achieved in 2012; at the Marrakesh Conference, we were the first country committing to net zero by 2050; renewable energy now covers 60% of electricity production and 2021



is the year of the end of coal plants in Portugal. We also advocate ambitious patterns for biodiversity such as the protection of 30% of our land area and 30% of our maritime area by the end of the decade.

However, climate action cannot be effective if all key actors are not on board. Leading by the example is essential. Portugal stands, as it always did, for a patient and resilient dialogue in which the most advanced countries are able to understand their partners' circumstances and concerns, and to support them efficiently.

*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 existing ones, taking full advantage of financing opportunities available in European and international financial institutions, also involving the private sector in these efforts. **(SDG17)***

The crisis caused by the pandemic should not be an excuse to interrupt policies, but rather an opportunity to reaffirm our commitments in the framework of the 2030 Agenda. In this context, the nexus between Climate and Oceans cannot be overlooked. We cannot fight climate change without tackling the ocean's problems.

Portugal invites all Member States to participate in the 2nd UN Ocean Conference in support of the implementation of SDG14, which will take place in Lisbon in 2022, and which will certainly constitute another opportunity to accelerate our collective implementation of the 2030 Agenda.