



HIGH-LEVEL POLITICAL FORUM ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

REMARKS BY H.E. TIJJANI MUHAMMAD-BANDE,

PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY

Her Excellency Madam Mona Juul, President of the Economic and Social Council,

His Excellency António Guterres, Secretary-General of the United Nations,

Her Excellency Madam Sanna Mirella Marin, Prime Minister of Finland,

Excellencies,

Distinguished Delegates,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I thank the President of ECOSOC for the invitation to participate in the Opening Session of the Ministerial Segment of the High-Level Political Forum.

As we mark the 75th anniversary of the United Nations, I am encouraged by the collaborative efforts of the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council to strengthen

multilateralism on our journey towards 2030, as the founders of our Organization envisaged. Both bodies play critical roles in supporting Member States and all stakeholders to achieve the targets set out in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Excellencies,

At the outset of the 74th session, I presided over the first SDG Summit since the adoption of the 2030 Agenda where leaders gathered at the highest political level to adopt the Political Declaration to gear up for the Decade of Action and Delivery for Sustainable Development. There, we launched the 2019 Global Sustainable Development Report, we set forth with a solid framework for all current and future discussions on sustainable development.

Now as we embark upon this new Decade, I call for collective efforts to accelerate action, and carve out transformative pathways to ensure that we leave no one behind. We need to develop and harness new types of data in order to strengthen evidence-based policy. This is essential as we recognize that although progress has been made since 2015, gains have been uneven within and among countries.

As the world contends with the health, humanitarian and economic crises wrought by the COVID-19 pandemic, we must

emulate the penholders of the Charter of the United Nations and advance multilateralism. Humanity cannot survive these multiple parallel crises if we do not work together with full respect for all peoples and all life on this planet.

Moreover, climate change will further disrupt life as we know it. If we are to make progress, we must share the common resources of the Earth equitably. To this end, the upcoming Biodiversity Summit will provide a key opportunity to build momentum for “urgent action on biodiversity for sustainable development”.

In this ‘super year’ for nature we must reshape our food systems to fit the needs of the people we serve. Hunger has been on the rise globally for the past four years. To guarantee food security and eradicate poverty, we will need inclusive, efficient, resilient and sustainable food systems. Furthermore, I count on the newly inaugurated Alliance for Poverty Eradication to serve as the leading voice to achieve zero hunger.

In order to make progress we require a whole of Agenda approach. We need to respond to the needs of our populations by providing social protection, protecting human rights, promoting good health and prioritising education and clean water and sanitation. Furthermore, we must invest in infrastructure if we are to reduce the digital divide.

Excellencies,

Progress requires financing. We acknowledged this in the Addis Ababa Action Agenda, however in the light of the socio-economic fall-out resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic funding is critical.

The coronavirus pandemic has exacerbated pre-existing systemic and structural inequalities in all countries. Our response must focus on the two-thirds of the world's population at risk of being left behind.

Markets have closed, supply chains have been disrupted, schools have been shut. Up to 160 million jobs in tourism, manufacturing and commodity sectors in developing countries have been jeopardized threatening economic growth and decent jobs. Those who are malnourished are more likely to have underlying conditions and thus susceptible to more severe symptoms of COVID-19. Social distancing and handwashing are a luxury for too many people living in poverty or fragile contexts. For the most vulnerable people, there will never be a return to normal.

Together, we must work to alleviate the impact on the well-being and livelihoods of people in developing countries and build back better to bolster their economies. In order to move beyond

COVID-19 we must uphold our commitments to finance sustainable development efforts.

As we move forward, we need to re-think how we undertake our work. We must forge new partnerships and create vital fiscal space for investments to guarantee sustainable development for countries in need. We need to support the most vulnerable countries from sliding into disorderly defaults. This will require improved governance, fair tax systems and a renewed commitment to eliminate illicit financial flows. Make no mistake, durable solutions emanate from strong political will and resilient institutions.

We have to build economies for the future and ensure decent work for all. This is the foundation of a future where no one is excluded; where the voice of every woman and girl around the world is heard and heeded.

When we sat together at the SDG Summit, we could not have imagined that the HLPF in 2020 would be in an entirely virtual format. I commend the 47 countries presenting Voluntary National Reviews which begin the first year of the second cycle for the follow-up and review of the 2030 Agenda.

We each have something to teach and something to learn and this week we will learn about important developments and experiences at the national level through the Voluntary National Reviews. These VNRs will highlight accelerated actions that can

set us on the transformative pathways necessary to achieve the Goals. Preparation has not been easy, and I applaud all Member States and Major Groups and Other Stakeholders for your determination at a time of crisis.

Excellencies,

The reality is our Decade of Action and Delivery has become the Decade of Recovery. The SDGs must be at the forefront of government strategies for recovery to safeguard our communities against future shocks by building resilient systems.

This is a moment of reckoning. Now is the time to build back better, to step up our ambition and translate the Global Goals into local action in order to create the future we want.

I thank you.

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