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**Closing Statement and
Introduction of Secretary-General's two Reports
E/HLS/2020/59 and E/HLS/2020/60
at the High-level Segment of ECOSOC**

New York, 17 July 2020

Madam President of ECOSOC,
Excellencies,
Distinguished delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

We have reached the end of the ECOSOC High-level Segment with today's forward-looking sessions. I am honoured to share some closing remarks and a brief introduction of the two reports of the Secretary-General.

This morning, as part of the discussion, the High-level Segment has addressed the COVID-19 pandemic and its economic, social and environmental impacts on the SDGs.

We have discussed how the pandemic has mobilized emergency action at local and national levels. We have agreed that the pandemic has reaffirmed the need to strengthen multilateral cooperation and governance. This is critical in order to deal with global emergencies in areas such as public health, climate change and others.

We have recognized that the fast-spreading character of COVID-19 and similar pandemics, requires strong political will and capacity at the global level to effectively help coordinate the actions of States. In this context, it is important to reflect on the changes required for the United Nations to play a supportive coordinating role.

The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the need for more resilient public health and emergency response systems, particularly in developing countries. It requires a response that looks not only at the short term and emergency measures. But, it requires a response that also addresses the deep systemic change and structural policies needed to reach the SDGs.

Distinguished Delegates,

The first panel of experts this morning addressed the scenarios and projections around:

- food security and sustainable food systems,
- climate change,
- biodiversity,
- energy,
- water,
- artificial intelligence and other emerging technologies.

Poverty and inequality, including the widening digital divide, have also been in focus.

Those discussions were informed by two complementary reports of the Secretary-General. I will briefly introduce these now as they can inform our continuing implementation of the 2030 Agenda in this time of crisis.

First, I will briefly highlight some of the key messages from the Secretary-General's report on this year's ECOSOC theme, entitled "*Accelerating action and transformative pathways: realizing the decade of action and delivery for sustainable development*".

The report reiterates that the world is not on track to achieve most of the 169 targets of the 2030 Agenda. In addition, the coronavirus has significantly increased the risks to the global economy. The report highlights the underlying fragilities of the global economic and social system, which the 2030 Agenda and the Paris Agreement on Climate Change were created to address.

The Secretary-General's report particularly focuses on making reduction in income inequality a key strategy to eradicate extreme poverty. And, it focuses on committing to rapid and sustained carbon dioxide reductions during the decade of action, in order to reach carbon neutrality by 2050.

Distinguished Delegates,

Global economic growth is expected to remain weak in the next few years following the devastating impact of COVID-19. Based on our latest assessment, the world economy is projected to shrink by 4.3 per cent this year. Amid persistent uncertainties, the road to recovery for the world remains elusive. Therefore, the eradication of poverty will need to rely on greater measures to reduce income inequality within and across countries. And, while income inequality must come down globally, this goal is particularly important in the more populous countries, where many people are poor.

The Secretary-General notes that achieving SDG 1 on eradication of poverty will require a combination of policies that promote economic growth, income redistribution, and global support to those developing countries that cannot achieve this goal on their own. Countries should also use the decade of action to build back better in terms of strengthening their healthcare and social protection systems. They should increase investments in sustainable

development and climate-related infrastructure. These would help to improve the well-being of those living in poverty.

On the issue of climate change, the Report has stressed the assessment of the IPCC, that the current global emissions trajectory would lead to an average temperature rise – likely to surpass 3.5 degrees Celsius by the end of the century. This means that global carbon dioxide emissions need to start declining now.

The economic argument for pursuing ambitious climate action during the decade of action is powerful. According to a recent Stanford study, limiting climate change to 1.5 degrees Celsius rather than 2.0 degrees, may save the global economy tens of trillions of dollars – with the benefits far exceeding the costs of achieving the global target. Delivering on commitments under the Paris Agreement, and urgently scaling-up nationally determined contributions, is critical.

Excellencies,

Building on this analysis, the companion report of the Secretary General is entitled “*Long-term future scenarios and the impact of current trends on the realization of the Sustainable Development Goals*”.

The report examines a global, best-case scenario pathway to achieve the SDGs, and to advance sustainable development until 2050.

The scenario provides us with a quantified timeline of what could be technologically feasible with coordinated actions to achieve the SDGs and beyond. It outlines a rapid transition driven by:

- extremely high end-use efficiencies,
- behavioral change, and
- business innovations in energy, water and land use, fueled by new Internet applications and artificial intelligence.

This will require reinforced global cooperation most immediately on the response to COVID-19, on science and technology, as well as a major push for global deployment of ICTs and artificial intelligence, including urgent steps to address the digital divide. Indeed, if all actions could be mobilized and effective, the SDGs could be achieved by 2030, and broad sustainability in a high-tech and interconnected world, could also be achieved by 2050.

In the scenario, the 1.5°C climate target and the achievement of the SDGs could be met without relying on negative emission technologies. Because of radical improvements in end-use efficiencies and behavioural change, by 2050, global final energy demand could be 40 per cent lower than today. Current rates of renewable energy deployment would suffice to meet future energy needs.

The stakes are very high. An increase in investment of 0.3 per cent of global GDP, or about \$350 billion per year, in human capital, technologies and the food and land use systems, could provide annual health, environmental and economic gains of \$5.7 trillion by 2030, and \$10.5 trillion by 2050!

Compared with current trends, it could double the growth of rural incomes and create an additional 120 million decent jobs.

The report concludes with a number of recommendations for Member States, stakeholders and the UN system. In particular, the Secretary General recommends instituting a regular exchange between scenario analysts, government science advisers and decision makers.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

This is one dimension of the kind of multilateralism we would like to see at the United Nations 75th Anniversary. I will also briefly reflect on this morning's very engaging discussion on the need for a renewal of multilateralism during times of crisis, and to meet long-term challenges to sustainable development.

Speakers agreed that the COVID-19 pandemic is a wake-up call for us to strengthen multilateralism.

Indeed, ECOSOC has an important role to play in mobilizing Governments, the UN system, civil society and young people to get back on track for the SDGs. But there is also room for the Council to do better.

As we heard this morning, ECOSOC could further strengthen its engagement with key constituencies, like youth and the private sector, in innovative ways. This could help to pave the way towards a more inclusive multilateralism.

In closing, the ongoing General Assembly process of review and strengthening of ECOSOC offers a particular opportunity to enhance the Council's role and potential within the broader context of a renewal of multilateralism and global governance.

At the end of this year's High-level Segment of ECOSOC, after all we have seen and heard, I would appeal to all Member States, stakeholders and others to take to heart the recommendations that have been shared. Indeed, there are encouraging signs of the continued commitment to the 2030 agenda. In the run up to and during this year's HLPF, over 100 new SDG Acceleration Actions have been submitted by governments and other stakeholders, using the dedicated online platform set up by DESA.

Distinguished Delegates,

As we move forward, let us think critically and creatively about the actions we can take to make positive changes in the world. Let us ensure that the coming decade reveals the "best case scenario" for everyone.

Thank you very much for your attention.
