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**Opening of the 2021 High-level political forum on sustainable  
development**

**Tuesday, 6 July 2021, 9:00 – 10:00 am**

**Opening remarks**

**by**

**H. E. Amb. Munir Akram, President of ECOSOC**

**Excellencies,  
Colleagues,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

It is a great pleasure to welcome you to the 2021 high-level political forum on sustainable development.

I am especially thankful to H.E. Mr. Macky Sall, President of Senegal, Ms. Kristalina Georgieva, Managing Director of the International Monetary Fund, Ms. Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala, Director-General of the World Trade Organization and Mr. Michael Kremer, Professor in Economics and Nobel Laureate of 2019 for joining us today as keynote speakers.

It is also encouraging to see that there are so many participants joining us virtually from all over the world.

This is indeed a testament of the importance we all accord to the work of the United Nations in supporting sustainable development.

**Excellencies,**

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a devastating impact everywhere, with health systems stretched and shattered and lives and livelihoods devastated.

In addition to the health impacts, the economic and social consequences have been severe. These greatly exacerbated existing problems and challenges and unveiled deep-rooted inequalities.

The Pandemic has rolled back decades of progress on the SDGs.

In the year 2020, the pandemic-related economic downturn pushed well over an additional 100 million people into extreme poverty. The equivalent of 255 million fulltime jobs were lost.

An additional 101 million children and youth fell below the minimum reading proficiency level.

Millions of people have experienced social exclusion.

And the economic impacts have been particularly harsh for the developing countries, where revenues have been eviscerated, debt liabilities have become large, and there is little fiscal space to recover from the pandemic and keep their economies afloat.

**Dear Colleagues,**

Not long ago, in 2015, we adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and agreed on the Addis Ababa Action Agenda as a global framework for financing its implementation.

We must continue to be guided by the values and structures of these international agreements as we face our current challenges.

The United Nations high-level political forum is the central platform for follow-up and review of the 2030 Agenda and its 17 SDGs.

The 2021 HLPF provides us a paramount opportunity to show our unwavering commitment for the achievement of the 2030 Agenda despite the obstacles and challenges posed by the Pandemic.

## **Excellencies,**

It is in this context that we meet over the next several days to take stock of the impact of the pandemic on the achievement of Sustainable Development Goals.

We will also exchange and reflect on policies to achieve a sustainable and resilient recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic and the building of an inclusive and effective path for the achievement of the 2030 Agenda during the Decade of Action and Delivery for sustainable development.

We will undertake systematic and thorough thematic reviews relating to sustainable development, including in-depth reviews of several SDGs and their interlinkages.

We will also learn from the 43 countries who will present their Voluntary National Reviews of how they were impacted by the pandemic and what measures they are undertaking to open the pathway to a more equitable world living in harmony with nature. Their pandemic response will also inform our collective response.

It is important that we learn from these thematic reviews and national experiences and build on them to give solid guidance for the way forward with the 2030 Agenda as our blueprint for sustainable future for all.

## **Ladies and Gentlemen,**

It is through the 2021 HLPF that we can provide a further basis for a committed multilateral effort to bounce back, rebuild, and resume and accelerate SDG progress to ultimately realize the vision of the 2030 Agenda.

It is through the HLPF that we can give strong impetus to international solidarity and boost efforts to support the response to COVID-19 in the poorest and most vulnerable countries and ensure universal access to vaccine.

Let us work together and use the opportunity of this HLPF to fully succeed in this endeavour.

I wish us all a fruitful and productive HLPF.

**I thank you.**