

Opening Statement

Amb. Lachezara Stoeva (Bulgaria),

**President of the Economic and Social Council, High-Level Political Forum on
Sustainable Development**

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Excellencies,
Distinguished Delegates,
Under-Secretary-General Li

Mr. Ndopu, Ladies and gentlemen,

It is my great honor and pleasure to welcome you to this year's session of the High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development which is a special one.

It is special because it serves as the Pre-Summit to the SDG Summit in September. Our attention will be on how best to accelerate recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic and accelerate implementation of the 2030 Agenda. This is the objective of our deliberations this year, and we must not lose sight of it.

The Forum takes place at the mid-point of the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs. It also brings to a close the second four-year cycle of the HLPF.

The HLPF will meet twice this year. Starting today, under the auspices of ECOSOC and again in September, under the auspices of the General Assembly, as the SDG Summit.

The July HLPF is the opportunity to build political momentum for the Summit, as well as identify key policy priorities to be addressed.

There is no doubt that the Forum is living up to its mandate, to play a central role in overseeing a network of follow-up and review processes at the global level.

In our deliberations, we will hear key messages from the ECOSOC Financing for Develop Forum. Issues of financing for development are at the forefront as we seek to accelerate SDG implementation. We will also receive key messages from the Multi-

Stakeholder Forum on Science, Technology, and Innovation, on the contributions of STI to the transformations required to achieve the SDGs.

Our discussions will be informed by perspectives from the regions, through the messages from the six regional forums on sustainable development. The regional forums continue to be indispensable platforms for assessing progress and exchanging knowledge, best practices and policy solutions to support the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, in line with regional priorities and specificities.

As we do every year, we will conduct in-depth reviews of several Sustainable Development Goals. This year, we will have dedicated sessions on SDGs 6 on clean water and sanitation, 7 on affordable and clean energy, 9 on industry, innovation and infrastructure, 11 on sustainable cities and communities, and 17 on partnerships for the Goals, as well as their interlinkages.

In preparation for these in-focus SDG reviews, DESA and other UN partners organized various expert group meetings to prepare for the Forum. Those meetings have helped inform the HLPF sessions by providing the evidence base for defining collaborations and programmes of work on the SDGs going forward.

Excellencies,

Distinguished Participants,

Our deliberations are informed by two key reports: the 2023 Global Sustainable Development Report and the Special Edition of the Secretary-General's SDG Progress Report. The 2023 GSDR focuses on interventions that show promise to accelerate SDG progress through key entry points at different stages of transformation. The Secretary-General's SDG Progress Report provides the latest measurement of SDG progress using the Global Indicator Framework.

Next week, a fireside chat featuring scientists of GSDR will be organized in the Ministerial Segment of the forum, to hear key recommendations from the GSDR on accelerating implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

A range of other inputs also inform the HLPF, among them the synthesis of inputs from ECOSOC functional commissions and other bodies, the Secretary-General's report on the HLPF and ECOSOC theme, and the Secretary-General's report on future trends and scenarios of the SDGs.

I have made a special effort this year to include the voices of youth (or youth voices) in our deliberations. We need their wisdom, energy and dedication to confront the challenges we are facing.

We will discuss the ever-important topic of the plight of countries in special situations, including SIDS, Africa, LDCs, LLDCs, and MICs. Our programme also includes sessions on local and regional actions. We will hear the important viewpoints of the major groups and other stakeholders on their priority actions for inclusive transformations.

Excellencies,

In the second part of the HLPF, we will move on to the Voluntary National Reviews. As you will agree, the VNRs are at the heart of SDG implementation, review, and follow-up.

The VNR reports reflect the pulse of the 2030 Agenda. Each year they highlight progress, challenges and obstacles in implementing the Agenda. This year we will hear from 38 countries as they present their VNRs. Being Bulgarian and European, Bulgaria, I am particularly pleased that the European Union will present its first voluntary report this year as well– a watershed moment for both the EU and the HLPF.

And my government was especially pleased to host a global workshop for the VNR-presenting countries in Sofia in April this year. I would like to extend special gratitude to the Co-Chairs of the Group of Friends of the VNRs - the Permanent Representatives of Morocco and the Philippines, for facilitating Member States' engagement on the VNR presentations.

We have an exciting, comprehensive, and action-oriented programme ahead of us. I encourage you to take advantage of the opportunities for interaction during the sessions.

I wish us all fruitful deliberations.

Thank you.
