



**Economic and Social Council - Organizational Session**

**“Handover Remarks” by Amb. Lachezara Stoeva (Bulgaria)**

**President of the Economic and Social Council**

**27 July 2023**

Excellencies,  
Mr. Assistant Secretary-General,  
Distinguished Delegates,  
Ladies and gentlemen,

It has been a privilege and an honor to serve as the President of ECOSOC during its 78th session.

We complete the cycle of our work in a world characterized by uncertainty amidst recovery.

The Covid-19 pandemic is hopefully now behind us, but the world is still grappling with its lingering effects.

The war in Ukraine, escalating inequalities among peoples and nations, debt, and the daily manifestations of climate change pose enormous challenges.

Humanitarian needs are at unprecedented levels globally, we are at record levels of acute food insecurity and risk of famine and we are seeing ever-increasing number of refugees and internally displaced persons.

As we have heard times and again over this past year, achieving the Sustainable Development Goals is in peril.

And yes, the picture is grim. But we can change that picture. We have the answer - the one we all came together to agree on in 2015 - Agenda 2030, our roadmap to transform the world.

We just need to finally get on that road and follow it by adequately investing in resilience; in universal health coverage, quality education, and social protection to fight inequality.

This is also our last window to avert the human costs of climate change, and to reverse environmental degradation and biodiversity loss.

And every day brings new opportunity to right the power imbalances that leave women and girls, and other marginalized groups, behind in any crisis.

Excellencies,

I believe that in the past year, ECOSOC has shown its own resilience - becoming an ever-more inclusive platform for addressing our challenges, unfiltered and head-on.

A year ago, I committed to ensuring that all of the segments, forums and meetings over the past year will contribute to the SDG Summit in September. And together we have accomplished that. I am also proud that this year has been inclusive – with not only the voices of the UN system, international financial institutions and the scientific community, but civil society, and very prominently, young people from around the world, were heard.

To illustrate, this year, we dedicated an extra day at the ECOSOC Youth Forum to gear up for a critical moment in our journey to reach the SDGs, namely the SDG Summit. The Summit will be crucial for young people’s fate and their well-being in the decades ahead - as well as that of future generations. Youth should not only have their voice heard they need to be part of the decision-making at all levels.

And the HLPF came back in full force, fully in person, with an enormous diversity of major groups and other stakeholders at the table and in the building.

38 countries presented their national progress and setbacks in the VNRs – and for the first time, the European Union joined this group. In the halls of this building, we had countless side events, special events, learning sessions, Labs, exhibits, and a performance, reminding us that there is future and it can be bright.

Throughout the year, I was privileged to work closely with the representatives of Major Groups and other Stakeholders. Major Groups and Stakeholders are part of our team, the SDG team. Yes, oftentimes we might not like what we hear but we need to hear it.

We must never lose sight of the people that we represent, and we are to be held accountable for. This is what “leaving no one behind” means in practice, and the Council is practicing it.

Excellencies,

The Development Cooperation Forum generated actionable ideas to promote high-quality, high-impact development cooperation in the areas of climate resilience, social protection, and digital transformation, prioritizing the most vulnerable.

The Special Meeting on International Cooperation in Tax Matters advanced policy dialogue on building fair and effective tax systems, informing the follow-up to the new General Assembly resolution on the "Promotion of inclusive and effective tax cooperation at the United Nations."

The outcome of the Financing for Development Forum, adopted by consensus, furthered discussions on the Secretary-General’s SDG Stimulus proposal, multilateral development bank reform, improved international debt mechanisms, international tax cooperation, and innovative financing solutions to unlock SDG investments. The Bureau’s consultations with the Boards of

the Bretton Woods Institutions and the Forum on Financing for Development follow-up advanced key priorities in this regard.

We also continued extensive debates on the operational activities of the United Nations system, an enduring and complex undertaking that deserves solid and informed stewardship from member States.

From the beginning of my Presidency, I also committed to reinforce the importance of respect for international humanitarian law in armed conflicts and to put people at the center of humanitarian response. In this context, the special meeting of the Council on social and economic measures to prevent genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity was an important contribution to understanding how the implementation of the 2030 Agenda can contribute to atrocity and conflict prevention, peacebuilding, and promotion of human rights. Through another special meeting, the Council also explored the transformative power of SDG16 to improve governance and reduce corruption.

The Humanitarian Affairs Segment and Meeting on Transition from Relief to Development clearly emphasized consensus on the need for concerted action to address root causes of humanitarian needs – and for stronger engagement by and with development, climate, disaster risk reduction and peacebuilding actors.

The Council continued to deepen the linkages between peace and development in the work of the United Nations. We enhanced our collaboration with the Peacebuilding Commission through joint meetings in December 2022 and June 2023 to promote coherence and impact for peacebuilding, sustaining peace and sustainable development efforts on the ground.

The Council intensified its efforts to address the complex and multi-faceted crisis in Haiti, through the work of its Ad Hoc Advisory Group on Haiti and a Special Meeting on food security in Haiti to mobilize urgent action and resources for a Haiti free of hunger.

Ladies and gentlemen,

These were just some highlights on the extensive body of work of the Council of the last year. It would not have been possible without the strong support of my colleagues in the Bureau - the Permanent Representatives of Chile, Indonesia, Italy, and Zimbabwe. Thank you, dear colleagues!

I would also like to thank the Permanent Representatives of Portugal and Rwanda, Ambassador Ana Paula Zacarias and Ambassador Claver Gatete and their teams for having accepted to co-facilitate the Financing for Development outcome document and for having conducted the negotiations so ably.

Special thanks to the co-chairs of this year's STI Forum the Permanent Representative of South Africa Ambassador Mathu Joyini and the UK ECOSOC Ambassador Thomas Woodroffe who, with their creativity, elevated the Forum to a whole new level.

I would also like to thank the co-chairs of the Group of Friends of VNRs the Permanent Representatives of Morocco and the Philippines Ambassador Omar Hilale and Ambassador Antonio Lagdameo for providing invaluable support to the VNR presenting countries.

I also take this opportunity to express my appreciation to the President of the General Assembly H.E. Mr. Csaba Korosi and his team for the excellent cooperation and coordination of our work.

I would like to thank the teams at DGACM and DESA who have been supporting me for the last two years - as Vice-President and President of ECOSOC but also in my capacity as Chair of the Second Committee. Special thanks to the interpreters, conference officers, sound engineers and everyone working behind the scenes to ensure that our meetings run smoothly.

And of course, I thank my own small but dedicated team at the Permanent Mission of Bulgaria.

And finally, today, I am proud to pass on the gavel to the next President of the Council Ambassador Paula Narváez.

Dear Paula, I wish you and the members of your Bureau every success in guiding the Council in the period ahead.

Thank you.