

**Statement by H.E. Lachezara Stoeva, President of the Economic and Social Council
(ECOSOC) for its 2023 session**

**Introduction of the Report of the Economic and Social Council to the 33 plenary
meeting of the General Assembly**

14 November 2023

Mr. President, Excellencies, Distinguished Delegates,

1. I have the honour to introduce the report of the Economic and Social Council for its 2023 session (A/78/3). The report provides a broad overview of the Council's work, including actions taken on a range of sustainable development issues. The Council continued to play a crucial role in responding to the challenges we face. Countries have been severely impacted by multiple interlocking crises that have further amplified pre-existing challenges, including those relating to poverty, food insecurity, inflation, debt and energy.
2. The Council's theme for the 2023 cycle "Accelerating the Recovery from COVID-19 and the full implementation of the 2030 Agenda at all levels" underscored the case for an inclusive recovery that addresses critical, immediate needs. At the same time, the recovery needed to marshal the transformative policies and resources for longer-term acceleration of the Sustainable Development Goals.
3. Serving as a preparatory event for the SDG Summit, the 2023 high-level political forum under the auspices of ECOSOC helped to build political momentum and bring together important policy priorities. As President, I sought to mobilize the various meetings, segments, and forums of the Council to pave the way for a successful SDG Summit.
4. At the HLPF, countries restated their commitment to the 2030 Agenda and the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals. They also expressed deep concern about the 2030 Agenda being severely off-track, with most SDG progress being slow, stalled or reversed.
5. The 2023 HLPF constituted the conclusion of its second four-year review cycle of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its 17 SDGs. More than 120 high-level representatives of governments participated in the forum. They were joined by heads of

entities of the United Nations system and other organizations, as well as more than 800 representatives of major groups and other stakeholders from all regions.

6. I would like to commend the 38 countries that presented their Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs) this year, joined also by the European Union, which presented its first review. With the completion of the second cycle of the HLPF, 188 countries have presented at least one VNR. One of the most critical elements identified by presenting countries was financing. Among other things, the VNRs highlighted the need for more strategic and impactful partnerships to accelerate SDG implementation.
7. Once again, the Permanent Representatives of the Philippines and Morocco, as Co-Chairs of the Group of Friends, contributed by finding friends of VNR countries who engaged in meaningful exchanges with them, along with other countries, major groups and other stakeholders.
8. Our deliberations at the ECOSOC High-Level Segment considered ways of strengthening coordination and building capacity for UN system institutions to become more resilient, foster trust, and prepare for the future. We also examined different perspectives and experiences aimed at overcoming 'short-termism', focusing on integrating long-term, forward-looking approaches to advance sustainable development and secure a better future for all.

Excellencies,

9. The Coordination Segment in 2023, showcased the remarkable knowledge and expertise of ECOSOC subsidiary bodies and UN entities in the context of COVID-19 recovery and the 2030 Agenda. The Segment placed significant importance on the 2030 Agenda as the guiding framework for addressing crises, emphasizing the interconnectedness of crisis response and sustainable development. Recommendations from the Segment focused on identifying and integrating interlinkages among the SDGs, enhancing resilience through informed policies, and leaving no one behind. At the initiative of ECOSOC Vice-President, H.E. Mr. Arrmanatha Christiawan Nasir (Indonesia), an annex of transformative policies and initiatives by ECOSOC subsidiary bodies and UN entities was launched to inspire SDG implementation.

10. With this as the second Coordination Segment, we consolidated several General Assembly reform provisions to strengthen the Economic and Social Council (A/RES/75/290 A). The Segment highlighted the Council's integral coordination role and demonstrated its key function in advancing the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs.
11. The ECOSOC Operational Activities for Development Segment chaired by H.E. Mr. Albert Chimbindi of Zimbabwe emphasized the importance of international cooperation and solidarity to address today's global challenges and advance the Sustainable Development Goals. The Segment successfully carried out its accountability role as a platform for oversight and guidance of the UN development system.
12. The Segment's theme was "*Guiding the UN development system's support in response to interlinked crises and to accelerate progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).*" It emphasized the vital role of international cooperation and solidarity in rescuing the Sustainable Development Goals. The Segment highlighted the UN development system's continued role in supporting countries' efforts to strengthen transformative policies and programmes towards achieving the 2030 Agenda, which demonstrated the added value of a whole-of-system approach through the resident coordinator system.
13. The Segment convened high-level Government representatives, senior UN officials from the country, regional and global levels, and private sector participants. Over 40 panellists, discussants and moderators participated, including more than ten Executive Heads and Special Representatives of United Nations development system entities, seven resident coordinators, and selected members of United Nations country teams.
14. In its subsequent resolution 2023/31, the Council welcomed the ongoing efforts of the Secretary-General on the repositioning of the United Nations development system, and acknowledged the progress achieved so far in advancing all reform mandates.
15. I am encouraged by the Segment and the Council's resolution and believe that the Council has effectively complemented the General Assembly in its work on key system-wide strategic policy orientation and operational modalities. The UN development system is strengthened by our engagement.

Excellencies

16. The crucial activities carried out by the humanitarian community at this highly challenging time were recognized at the 2023 ECOSOC Humanitarian Affairs Segment chaired by H.E. Mr. Maurizio Massari. As we look for transformative pathways to achieve the SDGs, humanitarian emergencies keep pulling us back. Global humanitarian needs are at unprecedented levels. Currently 339 million people in 69 countries are in need of humanitarian assistance, an increase of 65 million people compared to the same time last year. There is an estimated cost of \$51.5 billion for the UN-coordinated humanitarian response to target the most vulnerable 230 million people. The humanitarian work of the United Nations is more important than ever.

17. The Humanitarian Affairs Segment reminded participants of the severity and scope of the crises, as humanity reaches its limits. Despite numerous appeals, the financial response remains insufficient. Addressing the underlying causes of crises is crucial, and the coordination among humanitarian actors must be strengthened.
18. Participants welcomed the work of humanitarian agencies in the field, emphasizing the importance of neutrality, impartiality, and independence in their efforts. The inclusion of key elements in the response to food insecurity, including early action, should be considered in future efforts. The Segment again allowed Member States to discuss solutions for confronting soaring humanitarian needs, propelled by climate change, conflict and the disregard for international humanitarian law. Negotiations accomplished a successful outcome as the HAS provides a useful soft deadline by which to achieve consensus.
19. The annual one-day ECOSOC Meeting on the Transition from Relief to Development highlighted the imperative of harmonizing development and humanitarian assistance. It focused, among other relevant issues, on the promotion of peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development and providing access to justice for all in accordance with the respective mandates of ECOSOC and other intergovernmental bodies. Additionally, the meeting considered the existing agenda items of ECOSOC related to the Ad Hoc Advisory Group on Haiti, South Sudan, and the Sahel region.
20. Peace is inextricably connected with sustainable development. I am pleased, therefore, that during the 2023 session, the Council increased its collaboration with the Peacebuilding Commission, by organizing two joint meetings to promote coherence and impact for peacebuilding, sustaining peace and sustainable development efforts on the ground. Key takeaways from these meetings were the need for an integrated approach to peace, humanitarian action and development, as well as a greater emphasis on prevention and enhanced coherence at the country level.

Excellencies

21. I convened several special meetings to bring attention to issues considered relevant to sustainable development and to engage key stakeholders in our deliberations. Through these special meetings, the Council drew attention to the need to enhance governance and curb corruption through the transformative power of SDG16. In another meeting, the Council addressed social and economic measures to prevent genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity. Furthermore, the Council also focused on the needs of countries in special situations, including advancing support for LDC-5.

22. In view of the multifaceted crisis facing Haiti, the Council dedicated substantial efforts to mobilize action. Building on the work of its Ad Hoc Advisory Group on Haiti, the Council dedicated a Special Meeting on food security to mobilize immediate action and resources for a Haiti free of hunger. Four new members-- Kenya, Barbados, Saint Kitts and Nevis, and Jamaica--joined the Ad Hoc Advisory Group during the last session, and the Group's mandate was extended until the conclusion of the 2024 session.

Excellencies

23. The Council continued to strengthen its engagement with stakeholders throughout its various fora. In January we brought together Governments and a wide range of stakeholders to exchange new ideas, expectations and priorities, at the revitalized ECOSOC Partnership Forum, organized in consultation with Member States and stakeholder representatives. Following the previous practice, I established an informal Multistakeholder Advisory Group to address substantive and organizational aspects of the Forum.

24. The 2023 ECOSOC Youth Forum underscored the vital role of youth in driving progress in SDG implementation. The hybrid format of the Forum allowed for the engagement of 20,000 participants. It provided a space for youth to discuss their vision and recommendations for the 2023 High-level Political Forum and SDG Summit.

25. Young people expressed concerns about a weak COVID recovery, the climate crisis, their educational opportunities, job prospects and the state of the world. They see themselves as innovators, leaders and change-makers in the pursuit of accelerated actions on SDG implementation. They advocated for their active involvement at all stages of policy making and for their voice to guide decision-making for the present and future. The UN must create enhanced spaces for their meaningful engagement and provide the necessary support for their participation.

26. As President, I made a special effort to ensure the meaningful inclusion of youth in the Council, particularly by having youth voices in every session of the 2023 HLPF.

27. The Multi-Stakeholder Forum on Science, Technology and Innovation for the SDGs ("STI Forum") co-chaired by Ambassador Mathu Joyini of South Africa and Ambassador Tom Woodroffe of the United Kingdom again brought together a variety of stakeholders beyond Member States, including the private sector, the scientific community, and civil society. The discussions underscored that science, technology, and innovation can drive sustainable development and accelerate progress towards the SDGs. However, realizing this potential will require strong political leadership, effective policies and increased investment in STI. Among other things, the discussions at the STI Forum addressed the policy incentives and financial support required to attract the engagement of young people in STI, especially in developing countries.

Excellencies

28. In 2023, the global macroeconomic environment remained highly challenging for most developing countries. High levels of public debt, high inflationary pressure, interest rate increases, and the socioeconomic ramifications of the climate crisis, formed the backdrop for the ECOSOC Forum on Financing for Development Follow-up.
29. In this difficult environment, the outcome document of the 2023 forum, adopted by consensus, represented an important step forward in addressing the multiple intertwined crises affecting developing countries. Crucially, it advanced the required political momentum at the highest level, providing substantive inputs to the process leading to the SDG Summit political declaration.
30. There is a critical need to adapt international development cooperation to the new and changing global environment and evolving country needs and priorities. At the eighth Development Cooperation Forum, developing countries and their partners called for a paradigm shift in international development cooperation, to enable a better alignment with current challenges and opportunities. There was a convergence of views that development cooperation is currently not fit for purpose and must evolve rapidly to rescue the SDGs.

Excellencies

31. During this period, we also continued to forge stronger relationship with the General Assembly. With your predecessor, Mr. President, we convened a joint briefing on the work of the General Assembly and ECOSOC and we held monthly meetings throughout the whole session.
32. A core responsibility of the Council is providing oversight and guidance to its subsidiary bodies. As part of the Council's engine room, its functional commissions and expert bodies identified new policies to overcome COVID-19 and other crises and accelerate progress to achieve the SDGs. Their inputs are a great contribution to the work of ECOSOC. During the Management Segment chaired by Ambassador Paula Narvaez of Chile, the Council considered the reports of its subsidiary and related bodies, including their recommendations, as well as reports by UN entities on economic, social, environmental, health and related matters.
33. The Council, together with its eco-system, is indispensable for policy dialogue, forging consensus on development issues, and identifying emerging issues. The Council is an

integral part of the efforts to “turbocharge the SDGs”, in the words of the Secretary-General. Its Charter mandates are more important than ever in the face of pressing and complex economic, social and environmental challenges. Through the work of the ECOSOC system, we have begun to demonstrate what an inclusive and networked multilateralism looks like.

34. It has been an honor and a privilege to preside over the Council during its 2023 session, and I thank my fellow Bureau members, their teams as well as the Member States and all stakeholders for all their support in our collective endeavour. I am certain that the Council will continue to make a difference during its 2024 session under the able leadership of Ambassador Paula Narvaez.

Thank you!