



**2023 Arab Forum for Sustainable Development
Solutions and Action**

Closing remarks of the President of ECOSOC

16 March 2023

Excellencies,

Ladies and gentlemen,

It is an honor to deliver these closing remarks.

You met at an important time. The issues and topics on the forum's agenda mirror those your citizens see in the headlines and in their social media feeds: The rapid onset of climate impacts; Geopolitical tensions affecting food and fuel prices around the world; High inflation and concerns about debt sustainability.

This is a banner year for sustainable development. The Arab Forum on Sustainable development is a critical event in the lead-up to the July high-level political forum on sustainable development (HLPF). In turn, the HLPF is a stepping-stone on the way to the SDG Summit in September.

The Secretary-General has called the SDG Summit the centrepiece of the events and meetings this year.

The HLPF will build political momentum and buy-in from member States and stakeholders for the SDG Summit. My vision is for the HLPF and the various forums and meetings of the Economic and Social Council to serve as pre-summits and to provide substantive inputs to the SDG Summit.

At the midpoint of the 2030 Agenda, we are called upon to take stock of progress. Development progress is threatened by the combined impacts of multiple crises. We were off track even before the pandemic and subsequent crises.

The SDG Summit will sound the alarm bell that in many areas, the world is off track. But it should also be a moment of hope. If we look back, we have also come a considerable way since 2015, when countries signed on for an ambitious, aspirational, and universal Agenda.



We have made headways against child and maternal mortality. Digitalization is bringing information and government services to under-served populations. Technologies such as digital banking applications can help rural populations gain access to larger markets and global information. Renewable energy technologies continue their remarkable growth.

We have seen almost universal uptake of the voluntary national reviews (VNRs). Some countries are now embarking on the third or even fourth VNRs.

We *can* accelerate progress on the SDGs. Doing so will deliver enormous benefits, across the economic, social, and environmental dimensions of sustainable development. But doing so demands deep structural changes and transformative actions. Doing so means breaking away from business-as-usual approaches to development.

Together, we *must* fight for the SDGs. We *must* embrace transformation. And we *must* act now.

A successful Summit needs the priorities, commitments, and solutions from the regions. I look forward to hearing the outcomes of your discussions when they are presented at the HLPF in July.

Thank you.