

**Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC)
Special Meeting**

**Opening Remarks by H.E. Ambassador Collen Vixen
Kelapile, President of the Economic and Social Council
(ECOSOC)**

**During ECOSOC Special Meeting on
“*Natural Resources, Peaceful Societies and
Sustainable Development: Lessons from the
Kimberley Process*”.**

New York - 18 March 2022

**President of the General Assembly,
President of the Republic of Botswana, joining us virtually,
President of the Security Council,
Administrator of UNDP, representing the Secretary-General,
Chair of the Peace-building Commission,
Former President of the Republic of Botswana, here in GA Hall,
Excellencies and Honourable Ministers,
Distinguished Delegates and participants,**

- 1. I am deeply honoured to welcome you all to this ECOSOC Special Meeting on “*Natural Resources, Peaceful Societies and Sustainable Development: Lessons from the Kimberley Process*”.**
- 2. As some countries have demonstrated -- and I am sure we will hear more today -- natural resources play a key role in the global, national, local economies and in improving people’s livelihoods.**

3. If managed prudently and used sustainably, they can be instrumental for transforming our societies and the world. But if exploited otherwise and depleted, or used for illicit purposes, they can turn into a threat on the future of humanity.
4. This is why we, as Member States and other stakeholders, have in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development a dedicated target for SDG 12 “**to achieve the sustainable management and efficient use of natural resources by 2030**”. A purposely and positive target for harnessing such resources for the common good. Are we doing enough?

Excellencies,

5. From experiences to date, we are all aware that there is a huge risk with the exploitation and management of natural resources. According to the UN Environment Programme (UNEP), at least 40 percent of internal conflicts from 1949 to 2009 were estimated to be related to natural resources.
6. But today, the world is starkly different than it was before 2015 when we adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. With the enormous challenges we are facing, we need -- more than ever before -- the boldest and most transformative actions to shift our world onto a sustainable and resilient path.
7. With the 2030 Agenda and its 17 SDGs as our guiding principle and plan of action for **people, planet and prosperity**, we can -- and we must -- continue to foster peaceful, just and inclusive societies and work even harder to eradicate poverty in all its forms and dimensions.

Excellencies,

- 8.** Natural resources management can indeed be a complex endeavor, but has huge potential for peaceful societies and sustainable development. Revenues from natural resources can support efforts to implement the 2030 Agenda.
- 9.** They can help drive inclusive economic growth, promote economic diversification and beneficiation of other sectors, create quality jobs, promote social development and address inequalities.
- 10.** And we have examples of such success stories, including my own country -- Botswana -- and many others that have led by example in prudent management of their oil and other resources.
- 11.** The Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), and its subsidiary bodies, as well as the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF), have a lot to contribute through policy recommendations to the Member States on issues related to sustainable management of natural resources.
- 12.** The UN Regional Commissions, the Commission on the Status of Women, the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, the Committee of Expert on Public Administration, and the UN Committee of Experts on International Cooperation in Tax Matters, to name a few, are addressing this issue from the perspective of their respective mandates and constituents.
- 13.** Given the complexities involved, sustainable management of natural resources therefore requires a whole-of-society approach. Among other measures and considerations should include the following:

- Governments have the primary responsibility, but cannot deliver on this alone. They need to work in partnerships with all stakeholders, including civil society actors and the business sector.
- Communities -- especially those affected by mining activities -- must be engaged, to ensure that they contribute and benefit from the natural resources.
- Women, indigenous peoples and young people in particular can offer solutions for sustainable management and equitable benefits from the proceeds of natural resources.
- Transparent, effective and accountable institutions are critical for sustainable management of natural resources.
- Governments should incorporate sustainable natural resources management issues in their implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs. They could share their good practices through Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs) during the HLPF.
- The business sector must also align their corporate practices with the 2030 Agenda and its SDGs, to ensure that their activities and engagements contribute positively to socio-economic development -- especially in the affected communities.

Excellencies,

- 14.** Given the importance of a whole-of-society approach, we gather here today with a mix of key stakeholders to reflect on how natural resources' potential can be positively harnessed and unleashed to benefit countries and their peoples.
- 15.** We will explore lessons from international multi-stakeholder initiatives -- such as the Kimberley Process Certification Scheme - - aimed at enhancing cooperation for sustainable production and consumption of natural resources for development, in a manner that avoids their use to support illicit activities or conflicts.

- 16.** The Kimberley Process was an unprecedented ground-breaking initiative, launched by the African diamond-producing countries some 20 years ago at the height of concerns regarding diamonds' contribution to fueling conflict.
- 17.** The tripartite mechanism -- which brings together countries, civil society and the diamond industry -- aims to remove conflict diamonds from the global supply chain. It is a good example of how best to harness the potential of natural resources. You will hear more about the experiences this afternoon.
- 18.** Botswana's Former President, Dr. Festus Mogae -- who is present here with us this afternoon -- is a founding father of the Kimberly Process scheme. We shall close the session with his reflections.
- 19.** I look forward to hearing your views on lessons learned from the Kimberley Process in particular and other initiatives, as well as innovative approaches on how to enhance natural resources' contribution to peaceful societies and sustainable development.

I thank you.