



Republic of Botswana

STATEMENT

BY

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REPUBLIC OF BOTSWANA TO THE UNITED NATIONS
AND
PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED NATIONS ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL
COUNCIL (ECOSOC) AT ITS 2022 SESSION**

**DURING THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL
ORGANIZATIONAL SESSION**

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Excellencies;

Distinguished delegates;

1. Let me begin by thanking you profoundly for entrusting me with this important responsibility, as President of the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) at its 2022 Session. On behalf of Botswana, and I personally, we are indeed honoured and delighted to serve as this is also the first time we assume the Presidency of this Principal Organ of the United Nations since its founding in 1945.
2. I take this opportunity to warmly congratulate my immediate predecessor, His Excellency Munir Akram, Permanent Representative of Pakistan to the United Nations, for his sterling stewardship of the 2021 Session of ECOSOC. As a member of his outgoing Bureau as Vice-President, I benefitted a lot from his immense wisdom. I will build on the solid foundation he established, to further advance the important mandate of this August Council.
3. I, equally, commend the outstanding contribution by my fellow colleagues Vice-Presidents of the outgoing Bureau for the 2021 Session -- Their Excellencies Permanent Representatives of Switzerland, Ukraine and the Deputy Permanent Representative of Mexico. I thank them for the collaborative atmosphere that prevailed during our tenure, which allowed us to effectively support the outgoing President of the Council.
4. I wish to, once again, seize this opportunity to congratulate my colleagues the Permanent Representatives of Bolivia, Finland and Thailand on their deserved election to our incoming Bureau for the 2022 Session. I look forward to working closely together once the Bureau is fully constituted with one more pending additional member, hopefully very soon.

Distinguished delegates,

5. As I assume the Presidency of ECOSOC, I do so fully aware of the associated heavy responsibilities and the legitimate expectations, especially by those whom we serve around world who look to the United Nations for assistance. This is more so, when we are still going through an unprecedented crisis, way beyond what we could have imagined two years ago. The current surge of COVID-19 across the world, and its much more transmittable variants, threatens to further derail the much more needed global economic recovery.
6. In my view -- as we continue our concerted efforts to deal with the challenges we face -- ECOSOC's role has become even more critical, and is no less important than the other peer Principal Organs of the United Nations, including the Security Council and the General Assembly.
7. In other words, the difficult circumstances we face demand that ECOSOC must rise to the occasion and play its rightful role in waging a spirited war against disease, poverty and inequality, impacts of climate change as well as effective mobilization of both global action and resources during the Decade of Action to accelerate implementation of all the SDGs.
8. Notwithstanding the ravages of the pandemic, I still believe that the ambitious nature of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its 17 Goals remain a formidable blueprint for all our nations to work even harder to deliver its promise.
9. I am fully committed to support the UN Secretary-General to address the emerging challenges facing the international community. In his recent statement to the General Assembly, the Secretary-General spoke of four

horsemen who are threatening the world: Global geostrategic tensions, existential climate crisis, deep and global mistrust in societies and the dark side of the digital world. I firmly believe that ECOSOC must also be concerned, and has a contribution to make in all these areas identified by the Secretary-General.

Distinguished delegates,

10. The theme of this year's ECOSOC Session is therefore at the heart of the lives of people across the world: **“Building back better from COVID-19 while advancing the full implementation of the 2030 Agenda.”** But as we speak, today we are going through a very fragile and imbalanced recovery effort to contain the COVID-19 pandemic. Many developing countries continue to bear the excessive brunt and severity of the pandemic, and face acute lack of financial resources and urgent access to life-saving vaccines to support their response efforts.
11. The IMF also estimates that the pandemic has increased the financing needs to meet the SDGs by an average annual 2.5 percentage points of GDP for all low-income developing countries. At the same time, many developed countries and emerging economies have started seeing light at the end of the tunnel, in part due to better access and successful roll out of vaccines programmes and well-funded stimulus packages.
12. One of the most critical lessons we are learning during the ongoing pandemic is that global solidarity, multilateralism and cooperation are indeed our greatest assets. When we work together, our ability to overcome hardship is unparalleled. We have seen this in the incredible progress of science over the past year on the rapid production of the vaccines themselves.

13. At the same time, as the UN Secretary-General also reminded us, divisiveness stands as one of our biggest threat. Certainly, the existing North-South divide which this pandemic is deepening cannot be allowed to widen further. We are stronger as a collective, and we must immediately address any and all differences among our nations. Failure to do so, will only worsen the geopolitical and socio-economic tensions and deeply affect our present and future generations.

Distinguished delegates,

14. The road ahead will therefore remain difficult, but there are obvious areas where, working together, we can make rapid gains. I would like to outline some of broad pillars that will underpin my ECOSOC Presidency:

a) Swift Recovery from COVID-19

15. **First**, we must ensure swift recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic through urgent access to vaccines for everyone. Scientific progress, that was seen in the rapid development of the vaccines, can only be a true measure of success if access to the vaccines is not exclusively for some. True Global solidarity requires that our saying that ***no one is safe until everyone is safe*** be followed by concrete action.

16. I therefore join the call for the vaccines to be treated as a global common good -- not for some but for all and everyone. We must take urgent measures to prioritize the most vulnerable, especially in developing countries, particularly those in special situations, in conflict and emerging from conflict. The current disappointing trends in which developing countries are expected to vaccinate just half their populations by the end of

2021 -- while some of the advanced economies are projected to reach full coverage sooner -- is not a sustainable way to combat a global pandemic of the magnitude we are facing.

17. Mid-way before the convening of the 2022 High-Level Political Forum (HLPF), I therefore intend to organize a dedicated Special Meeting of ECOSOC to take stock on the progress made to date, and how we can bolster efforts to ensure universal access to the COVID-19 vaccines.

b) **Fiscal Space for a COVID-19 Response and Recovery**

18. **Second**, we must ensure adequate fiscal space for a COVID-19 response and recovery, that is also aligned with achieving the SDGs. We entered the Decade of Action with an already worryingly slow progress in SDGs implementation and a huge financing gap for the Development Goals. But with the COVID-19 pandemic, the clear reality now is that any meaningful progress towards achieving the SDGs, especially in developing countries, has been severely undermined further. Extraordinary measures need to be taken to mobilize resources from all sources for immediate response, as well as for long-term investments in critical socio-economic systems and infrastructure while also preserving the environment.

19. As things stand now, less than 20 % of stimulus and recovery funds have been spent in developing countries where the needs are much greater. Ambitious and innovative structural ways for debt reduction and relief; meeting commitments for Official Development Assistance and climate change funding; mobilizing multi-stakeholder partnerships including the private sector for the SDGs financing; improving tax systems, are imperatives for adequate fiscal space for supporting a sustainable recovery.

20. The Financing for Development Forum should continue to advance these discussions, building on the outcomes of the 2021 FFD Forum.

c) Inequalities within and between countries

21. **Third**, the pandemic has evidently hit harder on the poorest and most vulnerable in our societies. With its multifaceted impacts on health, the economy, food security and education, the COVID-19 pandemic has exposed and further exacerbated pre-existing inequalities within and between countries. Socio-economic inequalities in access to quality public services and digital technologies have also been worsened as digital transformation sped up during the pandemic when remote work, on-line health services and learning became the “new normal”.

22. This crisis is having a particularly devastating effect on vulnerable groups in the labour market, including youth, women and migrant workers deployed in the hardest-hit sectors of our economies. In particular, women have been disproportionately affected as they are placed at the intersection of many disadvantages, thus worsening gender inequality.

23. The irony is that, even before the pandemic the extent of the inequality gaps was also extremely prevalent in Middle Income Countries, including my own country, Botswana. This does not sit well at all, especially for countries that are presumably economically doing well.

24. Given that the situation will worsen after the pandemic, I am convinced that ECOSOC should devote sufficient time to promote dialogue on what is required to decisively address the root causes of persistent inequalities within and between countries, and thus reinforce national and international

efforts to promote equality. ECOSOC should also continue exploration of the interlinkages between inequalities, structural racism and the Sustainable Development Goals.

25. Building on the important groundwork begun by my predecessor, His Excellency Munir Akram, I believe that we can do more to identify and address the real root causes of inequalities and its interlinkages, such as structural racism. These are matters of serious concern which warrant our focus through dedicated discussions as ECOSOC.

d) Resuming development after conflicts

26. **Fourth**, post-conflict recovery and resuming development after conflicts is key to effective peacebuilding. Some parts of the globe, especially Africa from where I come, have historically witnessed recurrent challenges that threaten durable peace and security, in addition to other pre-existing multidimensional challenges of environmental stress, extreme weather conditions and climate change, food insecurity and hunger as well as rising rates of poverty. ECOSOC has an opportune moment to better utilize the newly mandated Meeting on Transition from Relief to development, to deliver on our mandates, particularly on the situations in the Sahel and Haiti, given their challenges.

27. To complement the work performed by other UN Organs and relevant bodies, I intend to leverage the role of ECOSOC to effectively assist countries emerging from conflict to return onto the road to long-term and sustainable development.

28. This can be achieved by further strengthening the relationship between ECOSOC and such important bodies like the Peacebuilding Commission through the joint meetings, in order to ensure more integrated support by the UN development system on humanitarian and development activities and support to peaceful societies.

e) Science, Technology and Innovation (STI)

29. **Fifth**, this pandemic has underscored the importance of transfer of technology, knowledge-sharing and scaling up support for innovation and technology, as a means for building resilience and overcoming pressing challenges. Advances in Science, Technology and Innovation (STI) have accelerated during the pandemic, certainly with promise for achieving the SDGs. But let us be clear that unless we close the digital divide and support the creation of knowledge everywhere, the pressing challenges including inequalities within and between countries will continue to fester and widen.

30. For instance, if we can work to close gaps in skills and data literacy, and reverse the setbacks incurred in access to education during the COVID-19 pandemic, we can move towards leveraging the full potential of human capabilities.

31. I therefore count on your continued active engagement at the Multi-stakeholder STI Forum to advance innovation, creative and ambitious STI strategies and policies to leapfrog our countries to achieve the Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR).

f) Climate crisis and biodiversity loss

32. **Six**, the past decade has been the hottest on record, with global temperatures already risen 1.2 degrees Celsius compared to pre-industrial levels. As already observed by many, this is dangerously close to the 1.5 degrees limit in the Paris Agreement. The escalation in the frequency of extreme weather events we are facing globally, including the catastrophic heatwaves, hurricanes, floods and droughts, is nature's painful reminder of the urgent need to address climate change and biodiversity loss. Again, we all know that the least contributors to Greenhouse Gas (GHG) emissions are especially the most vulnerable SIDS, LDCs and LLDCs and therefore heavily shouldering the impact.
33. We should also support ambitious and post-2020 biodiversity framework at the 15th Meeting of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity (COP-15), and scale up ambition for sustainable use of oceans through Ocean conference.
34. ECOSOC also has an important role to contribute on the follow-up to COP-26 by encouraging further efforts to incorporate climate resilience into COVID-19 response and recovery initiatives; implementation of effective adaptation measures, especially in the most vulnerable countries, including by investing in climate resilient technologies and early warning systems as well as address the socio-economic dimensions of climate change.
35. I have already initiated informal exchange of views with the in-coming President of the General Assembly on how our two Charter bodies can jointly advance the climate agenda. The outcomes of joint engagement between the General Assembly and ECOSOC, together with other relevant stakeholders,

should feed perfectly into the SDGs to be reviewed at 2022 HLPF on oceans and biodiversity.

g) Inclusivity and partnerships

36. **Seven**, as ECOSOC, our efforts to address the global challenges we face cannot alone be sufficient if exclusively confined to intergovernmental engagements and without the input of those that are directly affected or have a contribution to make to reinforce our decision-making processes. The VNRs process, and other informal panel discussions that were also convened during the 2021 Session, are amongst other examples confirming that ECOSOC has since embraced the value of diversity of contributions through multi-stakeholder engagements.

37. The Council should therefore continue to serve as a formidable platform for inclusive dialogue and to foster partnerships involving also the views of Non-Governmental Organizations, Civil Society and private sector. In fact, Goal 17 of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development does recognize the important contribution the private sector in particular can make if we are to achieve the SDGs.

i) Youth Matters

38. **Eight**, as part of the inclusion agenda, I particularly look forward to the ECOSOC Youth Forum and to hearing from the global Youth, as an inspiration for our work in ECOSOC and the HLPF, on how we can with their involvement keep the compass on the SDGs in the current crisis. We should also leverage the strength of other global initiatives that play a prominent role in championing partnerships for opportunities for the youth, such as

Generation Unlimited (GenU), which some of our global leaders are already actively engaged together with UNICEF.

39. During the 2022 ECOSOC Session, and within the confines of the established procedures, I will continue the work already started to ensure that the Council serves as a unique platform for inclusive dialogue and to foster partnerships with all relevant stakeholders.

Distinguished Delegates,

40. These were some of the broad themes I wanted to share around the work of ECOSOC and its subsidiary bodies and the HLPF this year to support international solidarity and an SDG-guided recovery from the pandemic.
41. Let me add before I conclude that the HLPF in July 2022 will culminate one-year of ECOSOC segments, forums and other meetings of its subsidiary bodies. The HLPF will take stock of the continuing impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on the SDGs, in particular examining in-depth **Goals 4** (on Education), **Goal 5** (on Gender), **Goal 14** (on Oceans), **Goal 15** (on Biodiversity) and **Goal 17** (on Means of implementation and Partnerships).
42. We will in the HLPF process take a critical look to determine whether our response and recovery efforts are moving us on to the path towards realizing the SDGs. My expectation is that the Forum should adopt a strong -- and hopefully another consensus-based Declaration -- with a limited number of recommendations for transformative policy actions, with emphasis also on international solidarity and multilateralism given the challenges we face.

43. To support such an outcome, I believe that the VNRs process is an important mechanism for knowledge-sharing, peer-learning and high-level leadership buy-in in the implementation of the SDGs. I will soon issue invitation for countries to voluntarily express interest to present their VNRs during the HLPF in July 2022. I encourage those countries that intend to do so to carry out innovative, evidence-based and inclusive VNRs processes.
44. At the just ended 2021 Session, we had 42 VNRs presentations which is a commendable participation given the impacts of COVID-19. While I will encourage as many countries as possible to volunteer, it is also my view that we should aim to maximize the value of the VNRs process. We should allow reasonable interactive discussions with the presenting countries. To the extent possible, I plan to suggest an approach that limits the number of VNRs presentations at the next Session so as to ensure enough time for meaningful interaction on each review. We will certainly give priority to the first-time presenters, while also ensuring balance and diversity among presenting countries. I will also continue to make good use of the Group of Friends of VNRs, which has been led thus far with great success by Ambassador Sandoval of Mexico.
45. Also important is to ensure adequate follow-up to the VNRs implementation process in all countries. I am delighted that the recent reforms of the UN Development System, and the 2020 QCPR, have provided sufficient guidance on how the United Nations can help make this happen in programme countries. This will be part of the discussions at the Operational Activities Segment of ECOSOC, along with the broader follow-up to the QCPR and repositioning reforms.

46. Placing focus on the interlinkages across the SDGs is also critical. For instance, the nexus between integrated food systems, food security, poverty, climate change, water, sustainable agriculture is but one example where synergies can be leveraged to maximize the combined impact across the SDGs. I will count on the usual support from UN-DESA to ensure a seamless preparation of the VNRs and an in-depth review process of the selected SDGs.

Distinguished Delegates,

47. In conclusion, as we start to reflect on the organization of the most immediate work programme of the 2022 ECOSOC Session, including the newly mandated Coordination Segment and the Partnership Forum in January, the enhanced Meeting on Transition from Relief to Development and the process to improve the interaction between ECOSOC and its subsidiary bodies, I would like to re-assure you of my commitment to encourage transparent and inclusive engagement with the entire membership of the Council.

48. I look forward to working closely with the members of the Bureau for the 2022 Session to implement the measures recently decided by the General Assembly in June, to strengthen ECOSOC and the HLPF. I will also use the General Assembly guidance to further improve the visibility, impact and inclusiveness of the HLPF and seek your ideas and views.

49. As a UN Charter body, ECOSOC has an important mandate to promote development. Its role has become even more critical in guiding and informing the response to the COVID-19 pandemic, mobilizing international solidarity as we seek to recover stronger and forge ahead to implement the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its 17 Goals.

50. Building on the renewed momentum of commemoration of the 75th Anniversary of ECOSOC, I firmly believe that despite the challenges faced we can maximize the reach, relevance and impact of the Council, its segments and subsidiary bodies, the HLPF and other forums to recover stronger from this pandemic. I therefore count on your full support and cooperation!

I thank you for your kind attention.