



**ECOSOC** | Economic  
and Social  
Council | 75

**OPENING REMARKS**

**BY**

**H.E. MR. COLLEN V. KELAPILE  
PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED NATIONS ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL  
COUNCIL (ECOSOC)**

**AT**

**JOINT MEETING OF THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL  
(ECOSOC) AND THE PEACEBUILDING COMMISSION (PBC)**

**ON**

**“PROMOTING DURABLE PEACE AND SUSTAINABLE  
DEVELOPMENT IN THE CONTEXT OF RECOVERY FROM COVID-19”**

**15 DECEMBER 2021  
10:00 – 13:00 HOURS**

**GENERAL ASSEMBLY HALL**

*Please check against delivery.*

**Your Excellency, Chair of the Peacebuilding  
Commission,  
Your Excellency, Deputy Secretary-General,  
Distinguished Delegates,  
Distinguished Panellists,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

1. It is my distinct pleasure to welcome you to the 2021 Joint Meeting of the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) and the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC) held under the theme: ***“Promoting Durable Peace and Sustainable Development in the Context of Recovery from COVID-19.”***
2. This meeting builds on the work of ECOSOC and the PBC on the COVID-19 pandemic, and its impact on peace and sustainable development.
3. With the resurgence of COVID-19 -- and as the Omicron variant spreads, with new waves expected into 2022 -- the poorest and most vulnerable countries continue to be at heightened risk of social and economic collapse. This resurgence underscores the need for continued vigilance and preparedness especially in conflict-affected countries.

4. We have seen in many countries how structural racism and entrenched patterns of discrimination have led to minority and indigenous populations to bear the worst effects of the pandemic, adding to historic grievances.
5. More hunger and less work continue to push more people into extreme poverty, and jeopardizing the achievement of the SDGs.
6. We need to pay special attention to protecting women in the informal economy, and also enhance our youth engagement.

**Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,**

7. While the more advanced countries have strengthened their recovery programmes in 2021, COVID-19 remains the most serious threat to the poorer countries, especially the conflict-affected ones.
8. Lack of access to vaccines and of fiscal capacity to respond effectively to cushion the impact of the crisis, coupled with supply chain failures and widening digital divide, have served only to fuel mistrust, new grievances and forced migration.
9. As I have repeatedly stated in my key messages, global solidarity and international cooperation remains crucial.

10. Vaccines need to reach the poorest and most vulnerable. Debt relief and debt restructuring is also essential to support Governments' efforts to continue to extend social protection so that people's health, jobs, and incomes are assured.
11. We must urgently address the high levels of food insecurity, while simultaneously continuing to protect our planet from the impacts of climate change, as we support countries in building back better.

**Excellencies,**

12. The entire UN intergovernmental machinery, including ECOSOC and the PBC, need to remain focused on delivering integrated, durable and innovative solutions to address the multidimensional challenges caused by COVID-19. This is the only way that we can sustain peace and promote sustainable development.
13. Conflict-affected countries are where the success of the SDGs will be determined. We need to reach the furthest behind first. For this reason, a conflict-sensitive COVID-19 recovery remains urgent.

**I thank you for your kind attention.**