



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 THE SPECIAL HIGH-LEVEL DIALOGUE ON "*THE AFRICA WE
WANT: RECONFIRMING THE DEVELOPMENT OF AFRICA AS
A PRIORITY OF THE UNITED NATIONS SYSTEM*"**

**CO-ORGANIZED BY THE PRESIDENTS OF THE UNITED
NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY AND THE ECONOMIC AND
SOCIAL COUNCIL**

**WEDNESDAY, 20 JULY 2022
10:00 HOURS**

**TRUSTEESHIP COUNCIL CHAMBER
UNITED NATIONS HEADQUARTERS
NEW YORK**

Please check against delivery.

- **Excellency, Dr. Mokgweetsi Eric Keabetswe Masisi, President of the Republic of Botswana;**
- **Excellency, Abdulla Shahid, President of the General Assembly;**
- **Excellencies;**
- **Ladies and Gentlemen;**

1. It is with great pleasure that I warmly welcome you all to this **Special High-Level Dialogue on "*The Africa We Want: Reconfirming the Development of Africa as a Priority of the United Nations System,*"** which I am co-organizing together with the President of the General Assembly, His Excellency Abdulla Shahid.

2. Together with the President of the General Assembly, we convened this Special High-Level Dialogue to place the sustainable development of Africa at the heart of the work of the United Nations, and use the opportunity of these troubled times to reconfirm the development of Africa as a priority of the United Nations system.

3. Indeed, Africa and its special needs has already been at the centre of the work of the United Nations since the founding of this Organization in 1945.

4. From decolonization and attainment of independence and promoting sustainable development in the continent to assisting establish lasting peace and security, the UN is today still present on the ground supporting the nexus between development, humanitarian, human rights and peace and security in Africa.
5. Today's Special High-Level Dialogue -- which brings us all together to reaffirm the development of Africa as a priority for the UN System -- is both timely and relevant.
6. For the past decade and a half, Africa has been facing a series of significant and multifaceted external shocks exacerbating the challenges confronting the continent.

7. Furthermore, these systemic risks have been further intensified by global shocks and pandemics such as recently the COVID-19 pandemic and the impact of the war in Ukraine.

8. The pandemic has led to the worst economic recession in half a century across Africa, with real GDP contracting by **3%** in 2020 coming on the back of a rapid debt build-up.

9. The Russia-Ukraine war, on its part, dampened projections of Africa's GDP growth by a further **0.7%** and inflation is forecast to rise by an extra **2.2%** in 2022, negatively impacting the lives and livelihoods of Africa's most vulnerable populations.

10. These multiple crises have amplified the urgent need to rebalance the global economy, and to reduce reliance on a handful of countries for food and energy security as well as the global supply chains.

11. We need collective action and international solidarity to address the looming threat of food insecurity and famine, particularly on the continent of Africa. We also need to work together to address the impacts of the Ukraine war on energy and the economy.

Excellencies,

12. As I have been advocating in all my engagements during my ECOSOC Presidency and the HLPF, the silver lining here is that there is an unprecedented opportunity for Africa to step up to these challenges, speed up its industrialization and economic diversification, and integrate itself further upstream in global supply chains through increased value addition at source.

13. To add to my optimism, for the first time in a generation, in recent years Africa has displayed the collective decisive measures and leadership required to surmount these challenges and to take its destiny in its own hands.

14. In fact, it has done so in articulating a transformative vision for the continent in the form of **Agenda 2063**, which is not only aspirational, but also pragmatic and achievable through its concrete 10-year implementation plans.

15. As we are drawing nearer to the end of Agenda 2063's First 10-Year Implementation Plan 2013-2023, this is the right moment to have this forward-looking dialogue.

16. It is also an opportune moment to reflect on how to use the recovery from COVID-19 and our response to various crises to accelerate progress towards the SDGs and the 2030 Agenda, along with Agenda 2063.

17. There is no greater testimony to the new narrative on Africa's development than the increasing role that Africa has been playing in international fora.

18. For instance, in the HLPF which has just concluded, **21** African Member States presented their Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs) -- a record high which also makes Africa the biggest Regional Group among those presenting their VNRs this year.

19. I, therefore, take this opportunity to commend all African countries that have presented their VNRs since 2016. As we enter the mid-way on the road to 2030, it is pleasing to note that all but one African countries have presented their first VNRs.

20. This is clear demonstration that the continent is committed to the full realization of both Agenda 2030 and Agenda 2063 -- which are mutually reinforcing and complementary.

21. I urge African Member States to accelerate implementation of both Agendas, and to continue to show leadership, political will and vision as we move towards the target deadline of 2030 and beyond.

Excellencies,

22. Let me now take a moment to focus my remarks on the themes of our Special High-Level Dialogue.

Domestic Resource Mobilization is the Key to Financing Africa's Development

23. **First**, on financing for development, in particular domestic resource mobilization, Africa's investment needs to achieve the SDGs were estimated at **\$200 billion** per annum prior to the crises and the financing gap has now increased by an additional **\$145 billion** due to the pandemic according to the International Monetary Fund (IMF).

24. As the Continent faces this challenge with increased debt, inflationary pressures and reduced fiscal space, the lasting solution can only come from within the continent -- but it also requires international solidarity and support.

25. External financing, such as Official Development Assistance (ODA), which has consistently fallen short of commitments, and stop-gap measures, such as the Special Drawing Right (SDR) allocations that were implemented in the aftermath of the pandemic address only the short-term issues and were focused on treating the symptoms rather than the underlying causes of the problem.

26. Moreover, in failing to put in place medium to long term measures to safeguard debt service and sustainability for African Member States, the international community missed a historic opportunity in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic.

27. Behind every crisis is an opportunity, and we must be united in our resolve to turn all crises into opportunities.

28. As I have repeatedly argued, we need to shift our mindset in approaching Africa's financing for development. Africa is already financing its own development predominantly from its own resources with domestic resources, including tax revenue and savings accounting for over two thirds of Africa's total financial resources.

29. Therefore, the real question at hand is how to increase the quality and the quantity of these resources -- in order to create and preserve the policy space for the reforms and transformation that is needed in Africa.

30. There is still untapped potential, due to weak tax collection systems, inefficient public administrations, the size of the informal economy and the illicit financial flows that is draining the continent of approximately **\$89 billion** per annum, according to United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD).

31. As African policymakers, we have a critical role to play in implementing and advocating for reforms that will strengthen Africa's institutions and governance mechanisms, which will in turn improve its tax and revenue collection capacity and rationalize the expenditures in a transparent and accountable way.

32. Still, Africa deserves and badly needs continued ODA and international solidarity. As the Secretary-General often said, the international financial system does not play in the favour of the poorest countries. We must use the opportunity of COVID-19 recovery to fix the international financial architecture through the necessary reforms.

33. Access to financial resources must be supplemented by access to the science and technology Africa requires to recover from COVID-19, and embark in economic growth.

34. International property rights and trading systems need further adjustments to allow this to happen. We need to go further than the recent World Trade Organization (WTO) meeting.

Further Regional Integration Through African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) will Make Africa the Largest Free Trade Area in the World

35. AfCFTA envisages a continent-wide single market covering **1.3 billion people**, with a combined Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of **US\$3.4 trillion**. Therein lies an unprecedented opportunity to make Africa a truly global player and partner, as envisaged in Agenda 2063.

36. According to the most recent estimates by the World Bank and AfCFTA Secretariat, once fully implemented, the AfCFTA could increase real income in Africa by **9%** by 2035 and pull an additional **50 million people** out of extreme poverty.¹

Climate change Impacts Africa disproportionately. COP 27 the 'African COP' Provides a Critical Opportunity to Deliver a Just Transition Allowing Africa to Meet its Development Goals and Provide Access to Energy for the most Vulnerable Populations.

¹ “Making the Most of the African Continental Free Trade Area: Leveraging Trade and Foreign Direct Investment to Boost Growth and Reduce Poverty”, joint report of the World Bank Group and AfCFTA Secretariat (June 2022).

37. Second, on climate change, Africa is home to **17%** of the world's population, but has historically contributed around **3.8%** to global carbon emissions.

38. However, the continent is extremely vulnerable to the impacts of global warming in the form of more extreme weather, heatwaves, droughts, crop failures and hunger, which leads in turn to further pressures in access to resources and also results in a vicious cycle of further conflicts and unrest with negative spillovers to the rest of the world.

39. According to the estimates of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), Africa receives **23%** of official global public climate finance flows. However, the Green Climate Fund (GCF) estimates that Africa receives only **5%** of total financial flows for climate investment.
40. Furthermore, the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) estimates that African countries issue less than **1%** of total global green bonds issuances.
41. The forthcoming COP 27, also dubbed the '**African COP,**' to be hosted by Egypt in November, is a critical opportunity to address this imbalance.

42. The African Development Bank estimates that the continent needs **\$7 billion – \$15 billion** every year to adapt to the impacts of climate change².
43. At COP 26, African negotiators proposed that a new goal of **\$1.3 trillion** of financial flows starting 2025 to cope with the challenges of climate change.
44. In addition, the latest **Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC)** report³ points out that adaptation is generally cost-effective and has positive spillover effects across the economy. In other words, a negative scenario is not unavoidable.

² African Development Bank, Climate Change and Green Growth, 2018

³ IPCC, Climate Change 2022: Impacts, Adaptation and Vulnerability, Feb 2022

45. Among the many opportunities at hand are investments in climate resilient crops -- that are more tolerant to heat and require less rain -- to break Africa's dependence on food imports and help rebalance the world's economy as well as investments in renewable energy, sustainable agriculture, efficient low-carbon transportation, the blue economy, and digital transformations that would yield transformative results.

46. According to the ECA, the return on green investments in Africa is extraordinary: up to **420%** in value addition and **250%** in job creation.

47. Whilst furthering these green investments, each African country's individual circumstances should be taken into account fairly as each one will require a specific energy mix to achieve low carbon development and universal energy access.

**Empowering Africa's Youth and Women will
Ensure No-One is Left Behind**

48. I would like to end my remarks by focusing on the empowerment of women and youth of the African continent.

49. Investments in human capital and capacity-building are critical to ensure that every African citizen has the opportunity to earn a fair income, live a healthy life, and contribute to society.

50. Given the imperative for Africa to harness its demographic dividend, such investments to empower the continent's youth and women will yield lasting results to leave no-one behind and to make "***The Africa We Want***" a reality.

51. Proper involvement of women and better youth engagement in Africa will also put the continent on track to realize the 2030 Agenda and its SDGs, as well as the aspirations and targets espoused in Agenda 2063.

52. Moving forward, we must all look forward to the September 2023 SDG Summit to bring new ideas and revive momentum on implementing the 2030 Agenda in tandem with Agenda 2063, in the spirit of leaving no one behind.

I thank you all for your kind attention.