

STATEMENT BY
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PRESIDENT OF ECOSOC
AT THE
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**Excellencies,
Distinguished delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

1. I thank you for this opportunity to brief you on the discussions and key messages from the 2021 session of the high-level political forum on sustainable development (HLPF) that took place in July this year.
2. The forum attracted engagement at the highest level from Heads of State and Government, Ministers and many Heads of the UN system as well as other organizations, including the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights.
3. Almost 200 high level speakers participated in the discussions including experts, mayors and local authorities, representatives of the business sector, women, youth, and other stakeholders. Many other participants and the general public followed the meeting via the Zoom platform or UNTV webcast. The HLPF also had a number of accompanying special and side events linked to the theme and goals discussed at the session.
4. The forum focused on its 2021 theme of a ***sustainable, resilient and inclusive recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic***, and reviewed in depth nine SDGs: 1 on poverty, 2, on hunger 3 on education, 10 on reduced inequalities, 12 on responsible consumption and production, 13 on climate action, 16 on peace, justice and strong institutions, and 17 on partnerships and their inter-linkages. It also covered the targets of the SDGs with a 2020 timeline.
5. The forum also took a bird's eye view of the world situation regarding the SDGs and the impact of COVID-19, and discussed national experiences to address the pandemic and its impact, guided by the 2030 Agenda. It reflected on measures and actions to ensure that no one is left behind, and that we build resilience against future shocks.
6. It reviewed approaches to invest in sustainable infrastructure, enhance financing in SDGs, mobilize science, technology and innovation and

bridge the digital divide gap. The forum also addressed support to the response and recovery efforts in countries in special situations, including SIDS, LDCs, LLDCs and Africa, and reflected on actions for the implementation of SDGs at the regional and local levels.

7. **Excellencies**, Forty-two countries presented Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs), including 8 first timers, 24 second timers, and 10 third timers. They highlighted policy approaches to embark on a sustainable and resilient recovery from the pandemic that leads to achieving SDGs.
8. The thematic review of the forum was based on the Secretary-General's SDG progress report, which substantiated the great concern about the impacts of COVID-19 on the SDGs, notably on poverty, hunger, health, jobs, women, inequality and leaving no one behind, as well as about the continuing environmental and climate crises.
9. The forum also received inputs from 68 UN system and other intergovernmental bodies and forums to support the thematic review. The important input from the Human Rights Council greatly contributed to the discussions.
10. The forum resulted in a Ministerial Declaration, which was adopted by consensus. The Declaration reaffirms the 2030 Agenda and the Paris Agreement, as the blueprint for sustainable recovery and enumerates a number of measures and accelerated actions that need to be undertaken.
11. The HLPF reiterated the commitment to international solidarity and multilateralism. It made a strong statement that, despite uncertainties, working together, we can achieve the SDGs through bold reforms, SDG-focused investments, and harnessing science, technology and innovation as well as forging partnerships.
12. A strong message that permeated throughout was that ensuring equitable, universal and affordable access to the vaccine is a moral imperative, the only way to overcome the pandemic, and an essential

condition for a resilient and sustainable world recovery. The Secretary-General's call for a global vaccination plan echoed the sense of urgency that pervaded the discussions. Along with the interventions of Executive Heads of the IMF, WHO, UNICEF and other organizations, the forum conveyed the shared commitment of the UN system to support access to the vaccine.

13. Furthermore, the forum expressed concern that the pandemic has sharpened inequalities among and within countries and that many developing countries, in particular countries in special situations, could be left behind on the path towards achieving the SDGs.
14. It is observed that within countries; women, older persons, youth and children, migrants and refugees, persons with disabilities, indigenous peoples and other vulnerable groups are among the most deeply affected by the pandemic. This led to calls for a renewed social contract to address inequalities, exclusion, access to justice for all, strengthening of institutions, laws and the promotion of human rights.
15. Many speakers at the forum stressed that climate change, biodiversity loss and the transition to a green economy remain top priorities, and recognized that while the COVID-19 crisis has gravely impacted countries' ability to implement the 2030 Agenda, climate change looms as the biggest hurdle to achieve the SDGs.
16. There was also much emphasis on the need to mobilize financial resources to support developing countries' recovery from COVID-19, along with a strong commitment to support LDCs, LLDCs and SIDS, which have been hardest hit by the crisis. Economic recovery and stimulus packages should trigger investments in the SDGs, address climate change and protect the environment.
17. In line with the Forum's emphasis on leaving no one behind, there was strong emphasis on gender equality as sine-qua-non condition for a speedy recovery and a more just society. Several countries undertaking voluntary national reviews highlighted the disproportionate impact of the pandemic on women and girls,

underscoring the importance of budgets, laws and targeted initiatives for gender equality.

18. You will all agree with me that the crisis has served as a wake-up call to spur a decade of truly transformative action to deliver for people and planet. This requires transformative leadership and political will, supported by effective institutions and policies, to build back better and ensure firm commitment on leaving no one behind.
19. On behalf of the ECOSOC Bureau, I welcome the engagement of the Human Rights Council in promoting the role of human rights and the 2030 Agenda, including through intercessional meetings. The theme that you addressed at your intercessional meeting held in January 2021, "***Building back better: Integrating human rights in sustainable and resilient recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic***", is in line with the theme for the 2022 cycle of ECOSOC and the HLPF, which is "**Building back better from the corona virus disease (COVID-19) while advancing the full implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.**"
20. Although the 2022 Forum will hold in-depth reviews of: SDGs 4 (quality education), 5 (gender equality), 14 (life below water), 15 (life on land), and 17 (partnerships for the Goals), **reducing inequalities and promoting strong institutions and peaceful societies are at the heart of the 2030 Agenda.**
21. Therefore, the HLPF and the Human Rights Council must work together to ensure that economic, social and cultural rights are respected and the 2030 Agenda is being implemented. This is why over the past year, the Chair of the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights was invited to speak on two occasions in ECOSOC. In this spirit, I look forward to working with the Council and the Committee as we try to advance the decade of action for sustainable development in the year ahead.
22. I thank you.