



**KEYNOTE REMARKS**

**BY**

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

**AT THE**

**FCI HIGH-LEVEL ROUNDTABLE  
CO-HOSTED BY THE MCGILL CENTRE FOR THE  
CONVERGENCE OF HEALTH AND ECONOMICS  
(MCHE) AND THE GLOBAL PARTNERSHIPS FORUM  
ON THE OCCASION OF THE  
2021 UNITED NATIONS FOOD SYSTEMS SUMMIT**

**24 SEPTEMBER, 2021**

**Excellencies;  
Distinguished Guests;  
Ladies and Gentlemen;**

1. Let me start by thanking the Director of the McGill Centre for the Convergence of Health and Economics, Professor Laurette Dubé, and my good friend and President of the Global Partnerships Forum, Mr. Amir Dossal, for inviting me to this special event on the occasion of the UN Food Systems Summit. I have looked at the programme of this event and noted the impressive lineup of speakers, and I have no doubt that they are going to enrich this important conversation.
2. **Master of ceremonies**, the last 18 months have been particularly difficult on everyone around the globe. While we see some glimmers of hope in certain quarters, the Least Developed Countries (LDCs) remain amongst the most vulnerable, as they continue to face high levels of poverty and hunger, among many other multiple challenges. In addition to being hit harder by the COVID-19 pandemic, they are also disproportionately affected by the changing climate and its devastating impact.
3. The 2021 High Level Political Forum highlighted that COVID-19 has profoundly impacted our food security. Between 720 and 811 million people in the world faced hunger in 2020 – as many as 161 million more than in 2019. 3 billion people have not been able to afford a healthy diet. We have a unique opportunity to shape the future of our food systems.
4. I am therefore happy that yesterday the UN hosted the first-ever Food Systems Summit, with the objective to mobilize a holistic, whole of society approach to addressing the SDGs, especially poverty and hunger issues.
5. The Summit was a watershed moment. It provided an historic opportunity for us to empower the people of the world to leverage the power of food systems to drive our recovery from

the COVID-19 pandemic and get us on track to achieve the SDGs by 2030.

6. The Summit preparations over the past 18 months brought together all UN Member States and other constituencies around the world, that includes thousands of youth, food producers, Indigenous Peoples, civil society, researchers, private sector, and the UN system. As a people's summit and a solutions summit, it agreed that everyone, everywhere must take action to transform the way the world produces, consumes, and thinks about food. The Summit mobilized the public to act, and Member States agreed to actionable commitments to take the agenda forward.

### **Master of Ceremonies;**

7. The Global Sustainable Development Report presented at the SDG Summit in 2019 underscored that policies targeting food systems have impact across the SDGs. For developing countries, stronger social protection floors are needed to ensure food security and nutrition. Countries must reduce the environmental impact of their food production systems, considering the entire value chain, by reducing food waste and reducing reliance on animal-based protein sources. Developing and developed countries both need to increase attention to malnutrition in all its forms.
8. To succeed in this, we need to find new ways to stimulate innovation and inspire changes in the behavior of a broad spectrum of stakeholders, including consumers. In this regard, the concept of food convergence innovation is very timely, and very much needed.
9. Professor Dubé, I applaud the amazing work you are doing in the area of food Convergence and Innovation and wish to congratulate you for the 15-year anniversary, which I believe you were celebrating this year.

10. **Distinguished Guests**, one of the key tenets of my Presidency is to bring together all actors to find innovative solutions so that we can find convergence of transformative thought and action to respond to the pandemic while advancing the SDGs. So I am delighted to be part of the Food Convergence Innovation Roundtable.
11. At ECOSOC, our mission is to focus on economic and social issues, we are therefore well-placed to provide policy guidance, as well as coordinate member states to learn from each other's experience. In addition, we support coherence of policy actions among countries and regions, thereby applying a system based approach.
12. In adopting such a system, we are able to consider regional solutions that eventually assist members to connect the dots and help regional organisations to also get traction on their challenges with food systems, which are cross border in nature.

**Excellencies; Distinguished Guests; Ladies and Gentlemen;**

13. As you might all be aware, my vision for this year's ECOSOC is **"Building back better from COVID19 while advancing the full implementation of the 2030 Agenda."** We are deeply committed to addressing the challenges we are currently facing, especially by all vulnerable members of our global family that have least capacity such as developing countries.
14. One of the most critical lessons we are learning during the ongoing pandemic is that global solidarity and multilateral cooperation are indeed our greatest assets.

**"When we work together, our ability to overcome hardship is unparalleled."**

15. Thus, I aim to bring together governments, the private sector and civil society to focus on investing in the SDGs. The

pandemic has reversed years of progress towards the SDGs, especially imbalances in our societies. We therefore, need to re-energize the private sector and civil society to invest in creating a better future. Some initiatives have already been launched and pursued under ECOSOC such as the Investment Fair.

16. On that score, I am delighted to note that, at the end of the session, the McGill Centre, in collaboration with the Global Partnerships Forum, will be launching the flagship programme, Food Convergence Innovation. It is my wish that this programme will galvanize likeminded organizations to join with related and complementary programmes aimed at transforming our agriculture and food systems through the use of technology and innovation.
17. I wish you a very productive roundtable and success in this important mission, and look forward to following progress.

**Thank you.**