

Opening Statement by
H.E. Mr. Collen Vixen Kelapile
President of the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC)

“Galvanizing Momentum for Universal Vaccination”

Friday 25 February 2022

Mr. President,
Excellencies,

1. In September 2015, world leaders gathered in this General Assembly Hall to adopt a uniquely ambitious 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.
2. However, in September 2019, the SDG Summit found that we were lagging behind in implementing the Agenda. It therefore launched the Decade of Action to deliver the SDGs.
3. Little did we imagine that, a few months later, the world would get engulfed into an unprecedented pandemic that would wipe out our advances in many areas.
4. We know the number of people who lost their lives. We also know the scale of lives shattered by the death of a loved one, the surge of domestic violence, the loss of livelihoods, the number of children and youth who will not go back to school.
5. But we also saw the best humanity can achieve, with the development of vaccines in record time. These life-saving vaccines provide a path to overcoming the pandemic. But they remain the privilege of a few.
6. The figures speak for themselves. More than 70 per cent of the people in high-income countries are now fully vaccinated against COVID-19. Only 11.4 percent in low-income

countries have received at least one vaccine dose. A mere six and a half per cent are fully vaccinated.

7. The extent to which we are able to ensure fair and equal access to the vaccines will determine the ability of the most vulnerable countries to recover from the pandemic. It will determine whether the world can truly overcome the pandemic, and embark on a sustainable recovery and achieve the SDGs.
8. We are therefore here today to launch a tidal wave of actions, to ensure vaccine access for everyone, everywhere.
9. Last April, at the ECOSOC meeting on “A Vaccine for All”, many called for strengthening cooperation on production, distribution, and technology for vaccines, and meeting the financing gap for a resilient recovery.
10. The Secretary-General has called for an immediate global vaccination plan, implemented by an emergency Task Force to work with pharmaceutical companies to at least double vaccine production. Let us commit to get it done now.
11. The countries and companies that control the global supply of vaccines must prioritize supply to the COVAX facility and the COVID-19 Technology Access Pool. All must support the WHO Strategy to get vaccines into the arms of 70 per cent of people in all countries by July this year.
12. I should note, however, that there have been positive steps that are a source of hope. Six African countries will receive the technology needed to produce mRNA vaccines. Moderna will invest in a state-of-the-art facility in Africa, to produce COVID-19 vaccines.
13. Developed countries will support the South African firm, Aspen Pharmacare Holdings Ltd., to produce the Johnson & Johnson vaccine. More governments, more private sector companies and the world at large must embark on such similar initiatives and efforts.
14. As President of ECOSOC, I have pledged to utilize the full strength of the Council and the High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development to bolster international solidarity and identify solutions to ensure equitable access to the vaccines.
15. With great collective effort and the right actions, we can succeed.

I thank you.