



**GOODWILL MESSAGE**

**BY**

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

**DURING THE COMMEMORATION OF AFRICA DAY**

**25 MAY 2022**

*Please check against delivery.*

- **Excellency, President of the 76<sup>th</sup> Session of the United Nations General Assembly;**
- **Secretary-General of the United Nations;**
- **Excellency, Mr. Cheikh Niang, Permanent Representative of Senegal to the United Nations, representing the Chair of the African Union;**
- **Excellency, Mr. Sidi Mohamed Laghdaf, Permanent Representative of Mauritania to the United Nations and Chair of the African Group;**
- **Excellency, Ms Fatima Kyari Mohammed, Permanent Observer of the African Union to the United Nations;**
- **Excellencies;**
- **Fellow African Brothers and Sisters, and all Africans in the Diaspora;**
- **Ladies and Gentlemen;**

1. I am greatly honoured to convey this message, on this momentous occasion marking the **59<sup>th</sup> Commemoration of Africa Day.**

2. Pursuant to the decision of the 35<sup>th</sup> Ordinary Session of the Assembly of the African Union of February, you would recall that the theme of this year is **“Strengthening Resilience in Nutrition and Food Security on the African Continent: Strengthening Agro-Food Systems, Health and Social Protection Systems for the Acceleration of Human, Social and Economic Capital Development.”**
3. This theme is both timely and relevant, as it also reflects the rapidly deteriorating global geopolitical landscape, and its dramatic impact on the immediate socio-economic prospects of Africa, including on its food, nutrition and energy security systems.
4. The uncertain global environment should nonetheless strengthen our resolve to achieve the aspirations of our Continental Vision as embodied in **Agenda 2063**, especially Aspiration 1 on building **“a prosperous Africa based on inclusive economic growth and sustainable development.”**

5. In line with this year's theme, Goal Number Three of Agenda 2063 aims at "**ensuring citizens are healthy and well nourished, and enjoying a life expectancy of above 75 years.**" Moreover, Article 14 of the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child also calls for adequate nutrition, care to combat malnutrition and improved knowledge of nutrition, including breastfeeding and human capital development.
6. Our blueprint and master plan -- **Agenda 2063** -- calls for sustainable development, collective prosperity and an influential Africa in global affairs.

**Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,**

7. A prosperous African continent should be able to feed her population, which presently numbers over **1.3 billion.**
8. I am, therefore, pleased that the Permanent Observer Mission of the African Union to the United Nations has

organized an Africa Day Exhibition with an appropriate theme “**Africa Can Feed the World.**” Yes, we can do it!

9. Agriculture is a promising sector on the African continent, that can stimulate and revive African economies whilst simultaneously addressing challenges of malnutrition, starvation and hunger that were worsened by the COVID-19 pandemic, climate change and lately the war in Ukraine.
10. It is imperative that Africa should improve the quality of life of her citizens by building strong food, health and energy security systems accompanied by effective **Social Protection Systems** and also anchored upon good governance principles.

**Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,**

11. The United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) -- which I presently lead on behalf of Africa -- is charged with the responsibility of ensuring better

standards of living and promoting social as well as economic development globally.

12. The Council, through its Regional Commissions including the UN Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA), is assisting Member States to recover from the devastating effects of the COVID-19 pandemic.
13. In conjunction with Vision 2063, Africa's road to realizing the goals of today's theme also depends much on the global priorities set out in the 2030 Agenda and its 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) particularly its sacrosanct principle of ***Leaving No One Behind***.
14. I am much delighted that the chosen theme is aligned with the first three SDGs, namely SDG1 on ***No poverty, end poverty in all its forms everywhere***; ***SDG2 on Zero hunger, end hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture***; and SDG3 on ***Good health and wellbeing, ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages***.

## **Excellencies,**

15. While the World Health Assembly Resolution of 2022 has also recommended key targets of addressing malnutrition by 2025, we must acknowledge that as a continent we still have a long way to go.
16. The World Food Programme has indicated that since 2020, Africa's has tipped the 250 million mark of undernourishment.
17. It goes without saying that, with the current global status of food insecurity, nutrition is set to deteriorate further particularly amongst the most vulnerable groups, if no prompt intervention is made to change course.
18. To give more clarity to this fact, a study shows that in 2020 -- when the pandemic spread globally -- additional millions of people were thrown into acute hunger.

19. Limited access to nutritious food does not only lead to early deaths in minors, but also leads to non-communicable diseases and other medical conditions that hinder younger adults to reach their full potential and carries many other ramifications.
20. The **Cost of Hunger in Africa** study has highlighted that countries lose around 1.6 to 16 percent of their GDP as a result of child malnutrition. These are worrying figures that we should all work to rectify.

**Ladies and gentlemen,**

21. As I conclude, I wish to note that ECOSOC commends the efforts made thus far by the AU in addressing the issue of food scarcity and malnutrition in the continent.
22. The School Feeding programs; the institutionalization of the Africa Day for Food and Nutrition Security (ADFNS); the African Leaders for Nutrition (ALN) Initiative; and institutional reform are amongst other commendable initiatives with great potential.



23. Let me also acknowledge the **Malabo Declaration** on accelerated growth and transformation for shared prosperity and improved livelihoods. This declaration can be the turning point for Africa, if fully implemented.
24. Moving forward, Africa must continue to device many more effective means for the prosperity of the continent and its people, as envisioned in Agenda 2063.
25. **I thank you for your kind attention, and wish you a Happy Africa Day!**