STATEMENT

BY

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

**AT THE FIRST GLOBAL WEBINAR FOR THE VOLUNTARY
NATIONAL REVIEWS (VNRs) TO BE PRESENTED AT 2022
UNITED NATIONS HIGH-LEVEL POLITICAL FORUM FOR
SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT (HLPF)**

**VIRTUALLY CO-HOSTED BY THE KINGDOM OF THE NETHERLANDS
AND THE UN DEPARTMENT FOR ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL AFFAIRS
(UNDESA) FROM 25-29 OCTOBER 2021**

Please check against delivery.

Your Excellency Mr. Tom de Bruijn, Minister of Foreign Trade and Development Cooperation of the Netherlands;

Honorable Mr. Jan van Zanen, Mayor of the Hague;

Ms. Francesca Spatolisano, Assistant-Secretary-General for Policy Coordination and Inter-Agency Affairs at the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations;

Co-chairs of the Group of Friends of VNRs, my colleagues Ambassadors Hilale and Manolo, Permanent Representatives of Morocco and the Philippines respectively,

Distinguished Delegates,

Colleagues, **Ladies and Gentlemen,**

1. First and foremost, I would like to thank Minister de Brujin and Mayor Van Zanen, for hosting this First Global Webinar to prepare the Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs) that will be presented at the United Nations High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF) in July 2022.

2. I am pleased to announce that 46 countries have volunteered this year to carry out a VNR next year. I am impressed that, despite the multiple crises we are going through, your countries' commitment to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development remains steadfast.

3. This reflects the belief that many Heads of State and Government expressed during the General Assembly General Debate a month ago that the 2030 Agenda is our roadmap for recovering better from COVID-19.

4. The VNRs have a success story of the 2030 Agenda. A record number of **176 countries** have presented VNRs thus far, some two or three times, since the start of the VNRs in 2016. The VNRs are the opportunity for countries to assess their situation regarding all SDGs and to review their arrangements and policies to implement the 2030 Agenda. I am convinced that the national preparations, which are expected to be inclusive and build on data and evidence, along with the exchange of experience at the HLPF, have truly had an impact in keeping and accelerating the focus on the SDGs.

5. As we face major setbacks on the SDGs due to the COVID-19 pandemic, I encourage you to use your national VNR preparatory process as a catalyzer to accelerate your recovery from the pandemic. I also encourage you to use your VNRs to identify and deal with challenges hindering SDG progress, strengthen institutions, align budgets with the SDG implementation and engage all branches of Government and all stakeholders in your preparatory process.

6. As President of ECOSOC, it is my intention to extend the time for interaction after the VNR presentations at the HLPF, as this is the opportunity for learning and exchange of experiences to happen. I also hope that the situation on the pandemic will allow us to meet in person or at least in a hybrid format. This will allow more informal discussions and avoid technical difficulties of virtual meetings.

7. I encourage you to conduct in-depth preparations for your VNRs, so as to make this process fruitful to you and other countries. I also want to draw your attention to the Group of Friends of VNRs which comprises countries who are willing to serve as your "friends" and assist you in preparing the interaction at the HLPF and any other aspect.

8. The Co-Chairs are the Permanent Representative of Morocco to the UN, H.E. Mr. Omar Hilale and the Permanent Representative of the Philippines to the UN, H.E. Mr. Enrique

Austria Manalo, whom I introduced at the beginning. I am sure that under their leadership, you will ensure a most successful dialogue at the HLPF.

9.   I also know that DESA is supporting you in this process.

10. The Bureau of ECOSOC and I also stand ready for any support you might need from us.

11. I wish you a successful workshop.