



ECOSOC | Economic
and Social
Council | 75

OPENING REMARKS

BY

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

**DURING THE AFRICA DIALOGUE SERIES HIGH-LEVEL POLICY
DIALOGUE**

**26 MAY 2022
NEW YORK**

Please check against delivery.

- **Excellency, President of the 76th 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 Africans in the Diaspora;**
- **Ladies and Gentlemen;**

1. At the outset, I would like to thank the United Nations Office of the Special Adviser on Africa (OSAA) and the Permanent Observer Mission of the African Union to the United Nations in conjunction with the Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa (AGRA), the Food and

Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the World Food Programme (WFP), the International Labour Organization (ILO), the African Union Development Agency-NEPAD (AUDA-NEPAD), and the UN Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA) for inviting me to participate in the **High-Level Policy Dialogue** as part of the **Africa Dialogue Series (ADS) 2022**.

2. The Africa Dialogue Series discusses an important theme on “**Building Resilience in Nutrition: Accelerating Africa’s Human Capital and Socio-Economic Development.**”
3. The ADS provides a global platform for examining and debating critical issues relating to Africa’s sustainable development, humanitarian, and peace and security.
4. I am delighted that this year’s ADS will be a building block to the joint Thematic Debate that I will convene with President of General Assembly on 20 July on the special theme: “**The Africa We Want:**

Reconfirming the Development of Africa as a Priority of the United Nations System.”

5. This Special High-level Thematic Debate will focus on issues of vaccines, energy, and productive capacity development as entry points to Africa’s recovery; climate change and preparations for COP 27, which has been dubbed an ‘African COP’; and on issues of domestic resource mobilization and global partnerships for recovery and progress towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals and Agenda 2063.
6. Now more than ever before, Africa has to build her resilience to ameliorate the rising food, fertilizer, and energy prices due to the war in Ukraine.
7. Africa also has to develop her food security systems, to reduce dependency on food imports and boost the continent’s food and nutrition needs.
8. It is imperative that this is done urgently. The **Food and Agriculture Organization Food Price Index**

recorded its third consecutive highest level in March, while a marginal decrease of 0.8% was recorded in April, which was still about 30% higher than in April 2021.

9. Similarly, the African Development Bank has indicated that the price of wheat has been increasing rapidly in Africa since the outbreak of the war in Ukraine.
10. The price of wheat increased by over 45%, while fertilizer prices in Africa have risen by over 300%.
11. To address the challenges of food prices in Africa, it is encouraging to note that the African Development Bank has approved **\$1.5 billion** African Emergency Food Production Facility to support 20 million farmers to produce 38 million metric tons of food. I commend the African Development Bank for this timely intervention.
12. While commitment by governments and their partners to put in place adequate social protection systems both at the national and regional levels has long been

increasing in Africa, the COVID-19 pandemic has brought attention to the existing gaps.

13. Indeed, the most recent ILO estimates show that Africa is the region with the lowest social protection coverage in the world -- with 17 per cent of the total population, compared with the global average of 47 per cent.
14. The coverage gap in Africa is associated with a significant under-investment in social protection (*as per ILO 2021: 'World Social Protection Report: 2020-22: Social protection at the crossroads – in pursuit of a better future'*).

Excellencies,

15. School-feeding programmes are a critical tool to address the problem of malnutrition, from a systemic approach. School-feeding programmes contribute to the improvement of children's nutrition and health (SDGs2 and 3), but have also an impact on nine other SDGs, including SDGs 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 10, 11, 12 and 16.

16. Africa also needs to reduce its dependency on unpredictable global supply chains to achieve food security and nutrition self-sufficiency across the continent.
17. According to UNCTAD, the number of African countries that are considered commodity-dependent increased from 40 to 45 between 2009 and 2019, accounting for almost half of the world commodity dependent countries (44.6 %).
18. However, the average share of commodity exports in total merchandise exports contracted from 81.9% to 76.7% during the same period¹.
19. Human capital development will help harness local and traditional knowledge, science, innovation, technology, and products to diversify and increase the quantity of traditional and indigenous crops and food products.

¹ State of Commodity Dependence 2 021, UNCTAD

20. Education, vocational training, and access to health services are also major factors contributing to increased agriculture productivity, eradication of poverty and lifting communities -- and particularly women -- out of a place of constant strife.
21. According to AUDA-NEPAD, 60 to 80 per cent of African women are employed in the agricultural sector. Considering the crucial role that women play in providing for their families -- and particularly raising children -- ensuring access to land property by women is a must achieve promotion of women's empowerment.

Excellencies,

22. As I conclude, let me leave you with the following key messages:
 - The nexus of climate and economic stress requires innovative solutions, that combine emergency response as well as structural transformation to economies, which is why multi-

sector approaches that integrate economic growth, economic diversification, and inclusive economies are key to strengthening food security in the long term.

- Transformative action demands the engagement and close participation of the people who drive our food systems, such as farmers, herders and food workers.
- In addition to governments, the business community -- from Small and Medium Enterprises to Multinational Corporations -- has an important role to play, through responsible business practices and innovative solutions to make food systems more sustainable, resilient, and equitable, while ensuring that all people can access a nutritious and healthy diet.
- There is a need to increasingly focus on feeding growing populations in ways that contribute to people's nutrition, health, and well-being, restoration and protection of nature, climate

neutral, adaptation to local circumstances, provision of decent jobs to the youth and inclusive economies, while taking a holistic approach that seeks a multiplying impact that contributes to the achievement of several SDGs and Agenda 2063.

- There is also a need to shift and scale public and private financing for food, including for science and research. This innovation and change in financing approaches must avoid excessive hidden costs and support healthier, more inclusive, and more sustainable outcomes.
- The interconnected crises facing Africa from the COVID-19 pandemic to climate change and food insecurity as well as the war in Ukraine are reminding us of our inter-connectedness and highlight the urgent need to strengthen cooperation at the national, regional, and global levels.

23. I thank you for your kind attention, and wish you fruitful deliberations.

