

STATEMENT

BY

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

AT

**DELIVERING CLIMATE ACTION – FOR PEOPLE, PLANET AND
PROSPERITY**

**HIGH-LEVEL MEETING CONVENED BY THE PRESIDENT OF THE
76TH SESSION OF THE UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY**

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Excellencies,

Distinguished Guests,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

1. I thank the President of the General Assembly for convening this very timely and important meeting, and for his kind invitation for me to deliver opening remarks.
2. We are here at a moment of great urgency, as we face the grim reality of an ever-growing climate change crisis. The climate change crisis carries deep human costs, and for many, existential threats.
3. Droughts, floods and extreme weather events due to climate change are displacing people as never before. They are putting lives and livelihoods at risk.
4. Concentrations of major greenhouse gases continue to increase, threatening our aspiration of limiting global average temperature rise to 1.5⁰C.
5. With the global average temperature reaching about 1.2°C above pre-industrial levels, the climate crisis has well and truly arrived. Its impact is being felt across the world and if we do not take action it will only become worse.
6. We have just a few weeks remaining until COP 26 in Glasgow, and as we prepare for COP 26, we have to bear in mind that this is just one of the last opportunities to address climate change and its devastating impact.
7. We have to view COP26 as a critical meeting to upscale climate action to achieve the 1.5 degree goal. Let us turn it into a moment when the international community rallies around robust and more ambitious climate action.

8. The climate change emergency is an integral part of the SDG crisis we have been facing, and that is gaining urgency with the impact of COVID-19.
9. In 2020, the global extreme poverty rate rose for the first time in over 20 years. Hundreds of millions of people were pushed back into extreme poverty and chronic hunger.
10. The COVID-19 pandemic has wreaked havoc worldwide on children's learning and well-being. Women have suffered a disproportionate share of job losses and increased care work at home. They have also suffered from violence.
11. Yet, with a surge in global solidarity and leadership and with the mobilization of knowledge and resources, countries can still deliver on the 2030 Agenda and the Paris Agreement on Climate Change.
12. Climate action and SDG acceleration must go hand in hand. They cannot be pursued in isolation. We need to work to realize the synergies between the two in order to help scale up ambition, commitments and results, and deliver the Goals for people and the planet.

Mr. President,

13. I wish to highlight the following few areas of action:
14. **First**, we must step up together, work coherently, and not at cross-purposes. We must bring together all stakeholders, including Member States, businesses, civil society, scientific community, cities or local governments, and strengthen efforts to drive action towards the SDGs and the Paris Agreement.

15. We have seen that this can be done, with the recent global conferences, such as the High-level Dialogue on Energy and the Global Sustainable Transport Conference, which have highlighted tremendous leadership actions and transformational multi-stakeholder partnerships.
16. **Second**, the SDGs should be at the centre of transformational changes.
17. Addressing the climate crisis requires a fundamental transformation of our economies. This we must do bearing in mind that countries have different developmental challenges and therefore no two national transition pathways will be identical.
18. However, the domineering factor is that everywhere, the SDGs should be used as a guiding framework for such transitions to enhance synergies and reduce trade-offs with climate action.
19. It is important to note as well that delaying climate action will only make the SDGs harder to attain.
20. Through the Technology Facilitation Mechanism under ECOSOC, we continue to share innovative solutions, experiences, best practices and policy advice, in support of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. I wish to urge Member States to continue to use and strengthen existing resources such as these.
21. **Thirdly Mr President**, we must live to our words and leave no one behind on the path to a net zero future.
22. The global transformation to address climate change must be just, inclusive, and equitable to ensure no one is left behind, especially women, children, youth, indigenous peoples and displaced populations.

23. It is critical to invest in reskilling of affected workers and economic diversification of communities ensuring a just transition.
24. The transition must not be unjust to countries least responsible for the GHG build up. These countries must receive support from developed countries to accelerate their own green development pathways.
25. **Lastly**, we must invest in adaptation.
26. The increasingly frequent reports of extreme weather events – heatwaves, hurricanes, floods – indicate the urgency of adaptation initiatives.
27. Yet, one in three people are not adequately covered by early warning systems in Africa, because weather and climate observations are particularly lacking.
28. This is despite the beneficial dominion in investing in adaptation. According to the Global Commission on Adaptation every **\$1** invested in adaptation could yield almost **\$4** in benefits.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

29. A global crisis demands a shared global response.
30. Coherent, coordinated and comprehensive responses from the multilateral system are more important than ever and must be stepped up with greater urgency.
31. Let us work together to accelerate the momentum towards a sustainable, climate neutral and equitable world, which truly leaves no one behind.
32. I wish you a productive meeting.

I thank you for your kind attention.