



**Remarks by H.E. Mr. Collen Vixen Kelapile, President of the UN
Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC)**

at

Special Session on UNEP@50

Nairobi, Kenya

3 March 2022

***“Strengthening UNEP for the implementation of the
environmental dimension of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable
Development”***

**Your Excellency Ms. Leila Benali President of the Sixth Session of
the United Nations Environment Assembly, and Minister of
Energy Transition and Sustainable Development of the Kingdom
of Morocco,**

**Your Excellency Mr. Uhuru Kenyatta, President of the Republic of
Kenya,**

**Your Excellency Mr. Muhammadu Buhari, President of the
Federal Republic of Nigeria,**

**Your Excellency Dr. Mokgweetsi Eric Keabetswe Masisi, my own
State President of the Republic of Botswana,**

**Your Excellency Mr. Felix Moloua, Prime Minister of the Central
African Republic,**

Honourable Ministers,

Executive-Director of UNEP, Ms. Inger Andersen,

Members of the Diplomatic Corps, and Heads of the UN System and other International Organizations,

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,

1. At the outset, let me express my sincere appreciation to the Executive-Director of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) for inviting me and kindly facilitating my in-person participation in this 50th Anniversary Commemoration.
2. I join the previous speakers in commending UNEP for effectively implementing its mandate, as the focal agency for environmental issues in the UN system. This includes monitoring the state of the environment, informing policy-making and coordinating responses to the world's environmental challenges.
3. On many occasions, UNEP has brought more attention to environmental problems that were previously given inadequate attention. It was the proactive work of UNEP and its partners in 1989 that alerted the world about the devastating impact of climate change. Only had we listened and acted in a timely manner.
4. Among many other commendable achievements is UNEP's dedicated focus on environmental education at all levels, the advocacy for protection of the seas and wetlands, and contribution to environmental multilateralism through supporting the formulation of international agreements.

5. Furthermore, I am impressed by the support that UNEP has already provided -- and continues to provide -- especially to developing countries in the field of green technology, particularly solar energy and electric mobility.

Excellencies,

6. I should note that as we celebrate UNEP's achievements of the past 50 years, this commemoration is also an opportunity for Governments and all stakeholders to reaffirm their commitment to work even more closely and collaboratively with UNEP going into what is already an uncertain future.

7. Now more than ever before, UNEP will need our strong support as it relentlessly leads urgent efforts to address the triple planetary crisis in the form of climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution.

8. As President of ECOSOC, I am determined to rally the Council's membership to support UNEP and inspire its work and coordination with the entire system. As the UN Principal Organ dedicated to development matters, ECOSOC greatly values the important input UNEP provides to the work of the Council in championing the environmental dimension of sustainable development.

9. This is primarily due to the fact that -- despite being indiscriminate -- climate change and environmental challenges mostly impact vulnerable groups in our societies, including the poor, indigenous peoples, small landholders, coastal communities and women and girls, as well as

countries in special situations such as Small Island Developing States (SIDS), Least Developed Countries (LDCs) and Landlocked Developing Countries (LLDCs).

Excellencies,

10. Part of building back better and recovering from the COVID-19 pandemic, should therefore include simultaneously addressing the triple planetary crisis. This demands working with UNEP to inform climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution mitigation and adaptation policy measures.
11. In this regard, we at ECOSOC look forward to convening the Member States and other stakeholders for the High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF), which will be held in July, where **SDG 14 on Life Below Water** and **SDG 15 on Life on Land** will be among the Goals to be reviewed in-depth.
12. I therefore count on UNEP, the Member States and other partners to ensure that the HLPF also benefits from discussions and outcomes of this meeting, as well as of the resumed session of the UN Environment Assembly.
13. I also invite the Member States to engage with our Council, and actively participate at ECOSOC's various activities that are aimed at preparing for the HLPF.

14. We must ensure that deliberations at the upcoming ECOSOC Forum on Financing for Development Follow-Up, the Multi-Stakeholder Forum on Science, Technology and Innovation for the Sustainable Development Goals, and the HLPF itself, reflect the inter-connectedness of the 2030 Agenda and the Paris Agreement, as well as all other multilateral environmental agreements.

Excellencies,

15. In conclusion, let me reaffirm that as President of ECOSOC I am committed to contribute in strengthening multilateralism, international cooperation and solidarity in a way that amplifies the voices of the most vulnerable countries and engaging all stakeholders to increase the ambition for sustainable development and climate action to ensure that no one is left behind.

16. But sadly, we are meeting at a time when our global peace is facing serious threats. Beyond the already severe setbacks occasioned by the COVID-19 pandemic, we cannot afford any further distraction from focusing on achieving the 2030 Agenda in the remainder of the Decade Action and climate action. We all understand that Peace and Development are interlinked, and none can be advanced without the other.

17. It is therefore my hope that global peace shall be maintained, in order to create the necessary conditions for ECOSOC and the UN system -- including UNEP -- to meaningfully contribute to an SDGs-led recovery

from the pandemic and thus achieve the longer-term socio-economic progress and sustainable development envisioned in the UN Charter.

I thank you for your kind attention.