



**OPENING REMARKS**

**BY**

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

**AT THE HIGH-LEVEL POLITICAL FORUM ON SUSTAINABLE  
DEVELOPMENT (HLPF)**

**5 JULY 2022  
09:00 HOURS**

**GENERAL ASSEMBLY HALL  
UNITED NATIONS HEADQUARTERS  
NEW YORK**

*Please check against delivery.*

- **Madame Deputy Secretary-General, Ms. Amina J. Mohammed;**
- **Mr. Liu Zhenmin, Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs;**
- **Excellencies;**
- **Distinguished Delegates;**
- **Ladies and Gentlemen;**

1. I am delighted to warmly welcome you all to the **2022 High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF)**, convened under the auspices of the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC).

2. I am particularly pleased that we are able to convene this year's Forum in-person, and under a very pertinent theme: ***"Building Back Better from the Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19) While Advancing the Full Implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development."***
  
3. I wish to seize this opportunity to thank all who contributed to the successful holding of this Forum.
  
4. I also would like to thank the Government of New Zealand and its Permanent Mission here in New York for providing International Sign Language interpretation for most sessions of the HLPF, thereby improving the accessibility and promoting inclusion of people with disabilities -- which is one of the declared priorities of my Presidency.

5. I extend my special thanks also to the European Union (EU) and the Government of Italy for the contribution they made to the successful hosting of the Second Global Voluntary National Review (VNR) Workshop in Gaborone, Botswana.
  
6. I further thank the Governments of Estonia, Germany and Switzerland for supporting in-person participation of representatives of Major Groups and Other Stakeholders (MGoS) at this year's HLPF.
  
7. Lastly, I thank the host country -- the United States of America -- for assisting participants to obtain Visas to participate in this Forum.

## **Excellencies,**

8. As we open this year's HLPF, I would like us to start on a note characterized by high hope and optimism. I know that many of you would think that there are few, or not even any, reasons to be hopeful and optimistic in the current circumstances.
  
9. Yes, I am fully aware that the pressure is on and the expectations are weighing heavily upon us. But I beg to differ and argue that we can and shall overcome our challenges.

10. And I do so, even though I cannot underscore enough how urgent it is for the international community to come together to arrest **conflicts** -- whether in Europe or other parts of the world -- while also addressing the multiple crises we are facing from **food insecurity** to **climate change** and **persistent poverty** as well as **inequalities**.

11. Let me explain why I am optimistic, against all odds.

12. **First**, the fact that we are gathered here once again in-person in this august General Assembly Hall means that --despite the grave challenges that persist -- we are well advanced in controlling the **COVID-19 pandemic** in many countries.

13. Yes, we know that the pandemic is not over yet and had a detrimental effect on our societies and peoples. It has slowed down the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals, reversing progress on many SDGs.

14. But at the same time, the pandemic has served as a wakeup call in exposing many aspects of our societies which were not right. This gives us the opportunity to indeed build back better and rectify our ways of living as well as fix the resilience of our socioeconomic and health systems, as the theme of this HLPF invites us to do.

15. **Second**, we already have the blueprint to anchor our recovery -- which we all agreed on in 2015. That is the 2030 Agenda and its 17 Sustainable Development Goals.
  
16. The Secretary-General's SDG progress report -- which the Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs will present this morning -- tells us that an additional **75 million** to **95 million people** will live in extreme poverty in 2022, compared to the pre-pandemic level.
  
17. Rising **inflation**, major **supply-chain disruptions**, **policy uncertainties** and **unsustainable debt** in developing countries, caused the global economy to slow down again at the end of 2021. This continues into this year.



18. We are witnessing the highest number of **violent conflicts** since 1945, and the highest number of **refugee** flows.
  
19. Still, the world's economy is projected to grow by **3.1 per cent** according to latest forecast in UNDESA **World Economic Situation and Prospects**.
  
20. A good number of countries are institutionalizing the social protection measures they put in place during the pandemic. Many are strengthening their health systems. Many more others and organizations are turning towards nature-positive economy.

21. **Third**, if we are sincere in our calls to strengthen multilateralism, international cooperation and global solidarity -- as we are often hearing from the highest levels of global, regional and national actors -- we are on the right path. We need to act accordingly on this pledge.

22. Even though a number of countries have already missed the WHO target to vaccinate **70 per cent** of the population by mid this year, there are tools in place such as COVAX, the COVID-19 Technology Access Pool and the mRNA vaccine technology transfer hub that can help us to move further ahead.

23. This will substantially increase population immunity globally, protect health systems, reduce the risk of new variants emerging and enable our economies to truly restart.
24. There are also a number of economic, financial and social solutions in place. More are being rolled out.
25. The increase in International Monetary Fund Special Drawing Rights, or the G20 and Paris Club Debt Service Suspension Initiative are welcome. But we need to go further.
26. Similarly, we have seen expanded investment in social protection floors and social protection for all, especially child-sensitive and gender-responsive social protection. This is another reason for hope.

27. Of course, we must do much more. But we can, if the political will is there. We know the challenges and the solutions. What we need is the determination, courage, trust and solidarity to implement the solutions.

28. **Fourth**, I am delighted that all of you in this General Assembly Hall have heeded my call to come largely in-person to this year's HLPF. We collectively form a diverse and inclusive group of high-level policy makers, representatives of international and regional organizations, academia, experts, scientists as well as Major Groups and Other Stakeholders from all walks of life.

29. I believe we have all come here with a common purpose -- to renew our commitment to the 2030 Agenda. We have come to agree on ways to deliver on the pledge we made in the 2019 SDG Summit, to accelerate action to implement the SDGs in the Decade of Action and Delivery.

30. And **fifth**, because of all this, I believe we are poised to have a successful 2022 HLPF. An HLPF that is inspired by the wealth of conclusions, recommendations and ideas from various year-long ECOSOC forums including the **Youth Forum** in April, UN system and other international and regional meetings, think tanks, among other stakeholders.

31. An HLPF that comes up with actionable solutions that we can take back to our countries and peoples.

32. An HLPF which strengthens global solidarity, deepens our understanding of our common challenges, allows us to learn from each other, expand our common ground and bolster our resolve to act together and support each other.

33. Our 2022 theme challenges us to address the questions that matter most. We should learn policy lessons from our in-depth review of the five SDGs, and draw from the experiences of the 44 VNRs countries. Let us use these lessons and experiences to the benefit of the world's people.

34. I, therefore, invite you all to use the opportunity of this HLPF to delve deeper into the discussions with open hearts and minds.

35. Let us come up with solutions that will propel us to new heights, into a world where we can all find **peace** and **prosperity** by protecting our **people** and **planet**, through leveraging strong and inclusive **partnerships** -- the 5Ps of the 2030 Agenda.

**I thank you for your kind attention.**