

**Statement of Colombia on behalf of the Like-Minded Group of Countries  
Supporters of Middle-Income Countries  
ECOSOC High Level Political Forum – Town Hall Session  
“Building back better from the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) while advancing  
the full implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development”  
Delivered by: Vice-president and Minister of Foreign Affairs, Marta Lucia Ramirez  
5 July 2022, 10:15am (EST)**

*Time limit: 5 minutes.*

Mr. President,

I have the honor to speak on behalf of the Like-Minded Group of Countries Supporters of Middle-Income Countries, composed by Armenia, Belarus, Chile, Costa Rica, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Jamaica, Lebanon, Mexico, Morocco, Namibia, Panama, Peru, The Philippines, and my own country, Colombia.

We are already in the midst of the third year of a pandemic that has taken an enormous toll on development gains and over 5.4 million deaths throughout the world. On top of that, the interlinked crises of climate change and environmental degradation; geopolitical conflicts; rising inflation, including food and energy prices; disruptions in global supply chains and international trade; rising cases of discrimination, racism and xenophobia; forced displacement and increasing debt levels in many developing countries; jeopardize the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals in this decade.

Developing countries, including Middle Income Countries, have disproportionately bore the brunt of these crises and face significant challenges to overcome them. If we are to ensure a sustainable recovery, a better understanding of those challenges and the structural gaps in which they are rooted is imperative to tackle them more efficiently and effectively through public policies and enhanced international cooperation.

Therefore, we urgently need to develop indicators that go beyond Gross Domestic Product as a measure of progress. There is now a generalized consensus that income does not effectively capture the many dimensions of wellbeing, economic and social progress, as well as environmental externalities. Even when gross income increases, economic growth is not equivalent to sustainable development gains.

Many middle-income countries still face high levels of informality; social inequalities; multidimensional poverty; large influx of refugees and displaced persons; dependence on imports of food and essential medicines; food insecurity; external debt; and the impacts of climate change and environmental degradation, among many other development challenges that need to be assessed through a multidimensional, context-specific approach.

During the last years we have witnessed innovative and more complex indicators that take into account factors different to income, such as the UN human development index, the OECD wellbeing index, and indicators specifically tailored for countries in special situations such as LDCs. We therefore welcome the call of the Secretary General in *Our Common Agenda* report to urgently apply complementary indicators to measure progress.

In that vein, we are convinced that a Multidimensional Vulnerability Index has the potential to enable a more comprehensive understanding to measure the complexities of sustainable development, as well as to contribute to a more useful, efficient, and effective allocation of global financial flows, in a manner that is beneficial for *all* developing countries. We acknowledge the progress made by the High-Level Expert Panel of the MVI and we deem it important to explore ways to capitalize that process and its outcomes for improving the provision of support for development, embedding the impact of current and future crises in bilateral and multilateral cooperation dynamics, informing access to ODA, debt risk assessments, and building resilience to current and future shocks.

Excellencies,

While we struggle to tackle these multiple social, economic and environmental challenges, we must not forget that the pandemic is still not over. Middle-income countries vaccination ratio remains well below the advanced economies, with many countries purchasing vaccines at commercial rates. We need to urgently recognize the COVID-19 vaccine as a global public good and ensure affordable, equitable and fair access and allocation of vaccines and health products for all, as well as to enhance the local capabilities to produce them.

It is also critical to ensure the inclusion of migrants in the recovery plans, enable their access to decent jobs, and promote faster, safer, and cheaper remittances, reducing transaction costs to less than 3 per cent by 2030.

Middle Income Countries contribute to 1/3rd of global GDP and represent 70% of the world's population and 62% of the world's poor population.

Most graduated and graduating countries, despite an improved per capita income, face structural and persistent vulnerabilities as well as other structural and institutional barriers. We cannot let graduation, nor the transition to a higher level of income, to become a punishment that increases challenges to sustain development gains.

A complete revamp of the support provided by the United Nations system and development partners to middle-income countries is urgently required. We therefore expect that the mapping exercise to be conducted by the Secretary General on the aid available to our group of countries will provide very clear and action-oriented indications on the need to develop a systemic, long-term and context-tailored response to address our needs priorities.

We welcome the organization of this 2022 High-Level Political Forum, and we would like to underscore that the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development will remain out of reach if middle-income countries are left behind. We therefore invite you, Mr. President, and your successor, to include a dedicated segment for Middle-income countries on the 2023 High-Level Political Forum agenda.

I sincerely thank you for the opportunity you have given me, and the Like-Minded Group of Countries Supporters of Middle-Income Countries, to convey our messages.