



**Statement by Ms. Anita Muižniece
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Latvia recently reviewed the implementation of its previous National Development Plan and adopted a new Plan for the time period until 2027. This is a perfect occasion to assess our achievements and outline the way forward, therefore I was pleased to present our Voluntary National Review during the 2022 HLPF.

Crises present opportunities. The COVID pandemic in many ways has been a stress test. However, looking back, in Latvia it did provide us with the opportunities to strengthen the healthcare system and accelerate digitalization in a number of areas, including education. The pandemic also clearly demonstrated our interconnectedness – on an individual and global level. That reinforces the need to move towards sustainable development together and to leave no one behind.

Latvia strongly condemns the Russian war of aggression against Ukraine and we're deeply concerned by the reported rise in violent conflicts worldwide and how they exacerbate pre-existing vulnerabilities and create new ones. Russia's war against Ukraine is a clear violation of the UN Charter, and has led to death, displacement of people, disruption of global supply chains for food and fuel. It must be stopped.

We stand firmly in support of Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity within its internationally recognized borders. We have to protect the rules-based international order and multilateral system with the United Nations at its core.

Climate change, the loss of biodiversity and pollution are three self-inflicted planetary crises that are interdependent and put the survival and wellbeing of current and future generations at unprecedented risk. Human demand for natural capital exceeded the carrying capacity of our environment, and growth continues to take the priority over a clean and

healthy environment. The tense situation in the world encourages us to speed up the reduction of dependence on fossil fuel and promotes the use of renewable energy resources. The “leave no-one behind” approach is crucial for achieving climate neutrality and climate resilience

Latvia is proud of its stable gains in Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions (SDG 16) that contribute to society’s resilience. We stand ready to share our best practices, for instance in the area of digital solutions for public administration and civic dialogue. We are equally proud of progress in Partnerships for the Goals (SDG 17), including a structural and funding boost for bilateral development cooperation, that will allow Latvia to further advance existing partnerships and develop new ones, including in Africa. As we embark on a new chapter in Latvia’s development cooperation policy, we will continue to strengthen cooperation with civil society and private sector partners.

Sustainable development cannot be sustainable without full, equal, effective and meaningful involvement of women and girls. Latvia has long been a champion of gender equality and empowerment of women, yet we also recognize that there’s still some unfinished business in this area in Latvia such as the gender pay gap. We are concerned that the world is not on track to meet SDG5 by 2030 and that women have been disproportionately affected both by the Covid-19 pandemic and the ongoing conflicts and wars. We must all step up the efforts to achieve SDG 5, and as Members of the Commission on the Status of Women and incoming Member of the UN Women Executive Board, we will work with Member States and other stakeholders to contribute to this end.

We have eight years left to achieve Sustainable Development Goals. Let’s make good use of this time and focus on *transformative factors* that accelerate the achievement of all of the Global Goals. First – quality

education is our best investment for sustainable and peaceful future. It is essential that education systems around the world focus on the development of key competences and basic skills that are necessary for individuals to lead a quality professional and personal lives. Education policies should also be geared towards fostering talent and skills for innovation, thus increasing productivity, smart and sustainable economic growth.

Second – let's harness sustainable finance, focussing spending on green and social solutions.

Third, let's make well-informed decisions based on sound evidence and data. In this context and the larger context of societal resilience, information and media literacy are critical for navigating increasingly complex media environments and avoiding the pitfalls of polarisation and social media bubbles.

2022 is the final year in Latvia's term (2020 - 2022) as a Member of the UN Economic and Social Council. We are pleased to have contributed to advancing the ECOSOC's agenda and response to the COVID-19 pandemic during our term. Latvia remains committed to work together with other UN Member States in the spirit of solidarity and multilateral cooperation to build back better and advance the Decade of Action.