



**2023 session of the UN High Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development
(HLPF)**

10 – 19 July 2023

Ministerial Segment of HLPF (17 – 20 July)

General debate

**Theme - “Building momentum towards the 2023 SDG Summit: Transformation
for accelerating implementation of the SDGs”
Sri Lanka Statement**

President of the Economic and Social Council, Lachezara Stoeva
President of the General Assembly
Distinguished guests
Fellow delegates

Let me congratulate you, Ambassador Lachezara Stoeva on your Presidency.

Building momentum towards the SDG summit appears to be no easy task. We are reminded by His Holiness Pope Francis that in doing so the interest of real human beings must take precedence over partisan interest, however legitimate the latter may be.

Our theme today, “building momentum towards the 2023 SDGs summit, is no more than the quest to regain a safer and better planet; the planet that it used to be. But if we ask ourselves the question as to what precisely “better” means it would mean and include establishing explicit benchmarks for progress, analyzing current global patterns and considering the impact they have on the human race.

The 17 interconnected goals provide us a framework to give us a clearer understanding of where humanity is: at the edge of an abyss as the SG describes it, in economic, environmental and social practices. You will appreciate that the goals present to us a continuous process that no nation on this planet has fully achieved. These goals apply to all nations irrespective of whether they were developed or developing. These goals are structured upon the hallowed principles of human rights, justice, equal opportunity and fairness as a value system that recognizes the social contract and the humanity in all of us. Achieving SDGs therefore, as a challenge to our human nature, presents to us quantifiable measures regarding the progress of the SDGs and a method of accountability and a pathway to defining what it takes to build a better world. A commitment therefore to build momentum towards a summit offers all of us an opportunity to advance shared global aspirations in our own jurisdictions and outside it.

Madam President, Sri Lanka too has been affected by the setbacks caused by the multidimensional impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and the global economic crisis. However, we have not given up. Following its Second Voluntary National Review on SDG Implementation presented in 2022, the government ministries and agencies have taken increased ownership of the 2030 agenda and identified nationally appropriate SDG targets. All planning and programmes have been directed towards the SDGs and to monitor and evaluate progress. Accordingly, 21 Ministries have set 157 National SDG targets.. These national SDG targets will be integrated into a monitoring and evaluation framework for SDG progress assessment in Sri Lanka. In this way, the government of Sri Lanka has committed to next several years of accelerated, sustained and transformative action, through integrated and targeted policies and actions.

To support this integrated approach, Sri Lanka has strengthened the SDG data landscape. This progressive step has resulted in Sri Lanka being placed at 10th out of 53 countries in the Asia-Pacific region for SDG data availability by the UNESCAP. This would enable the government's capacity for evidence-informed policy-making for SDGs, as we work with renewed purpose towards strengthening public institutions, rebuilding Sri Lanka, and not leave anyone behind.

Madam President, in this path which seeks to align national priorities with global agendas ensures that Sri Lanka not only mitigates regression of the achievements of the SDGs, but also make progress on the goals identified. We take particular note of the Secretary-General's observations that we cannot persist with a 'morally bankrupt' international financial system that stymies the ability of developing countries to meet the targets. With high inflation, low economic growth and high interest rates most of the developing countries are experiencing severe economic and financial hardships with debt burden. Adequate and timely measures need to be initiated at a global level to reform the international financial architecture to assist countries in debt restructuring to restore liquidity. Sri Lanka is ready to contribute to the ongoing discussions in this regard.

Madam President, the primary challenge in accelerating the progress of the 2030 agenda is lack of requisite and sustainable financing. Scaling up SDG financing, investment and development cooperation need to be strengthened through south-south and triangular cooperation. In this context, the SDG stimulus proposed by UNSG is vital to ensure that 2030 Agenda regains its traction without a delay.

Distinguished delegates, the commitments that we make publicly today gives us the space and the opportunity to re-build our own credibility by a commitment to implementation. Implementation, as Former Secretary General Ban Ki-Moon said it, is the litmus test of the new agenda. If the rich continue to consume the poor, if developed countries exploit the developing countries and burden them with obligations that they cannot fulfil the recovery process would be nearly impossible. In other words, we need to dispel from our minds the ghosts of the past colonialism and instead to spread the gospel of peace, of brotherhood, of love and exercise the collaborative model of conduct to address emerging priorities such as global poverty, global financial insecurity, global health, climate action, the establishment of just and fair governance and elimination of corruption and of localization.

Distinguished delegates, you will accept without demur that the SDGs are now firmly established as the lingua franca of the global development community. You will appreciate that our ability to establish collaboration and accelerate investments to major initiatives such as “the build back better world partnership” will be dependent upon our own ability to demonstrate how we intend to build momentum towards the SDG summit.

Madam President, the journey to build back better must begin here. In building momentum towards 2023, there are pressing needs and yawning gaps that need to be addressed. We are making inadequate progress or even adopting the simplest measures of human development, sad to say leaving millions behind.

Madam President, Sri Lanka as the incumbent President of the High-Level Committee on South-South Cooperation, also takes note of the importance of

South-South investment, trade and technology transfers among the global south. Such cooperation can strengthen our collective path to achieving the SDGs. Domestically, Sri Lanka has also launched the SDG Investor Map, which helps the private sector to identify investment themes in emerging markets that are in line with government policies and national sustainable development needs.

Madam President, one of the focus areas of Sri Lanka is transformation towards a Green Economy by 2050, towards which Sri Lanka has initiated an action plan. Accordingly, Sri Lanka's Climate Prosperity Plan (CPP) proposes several renewable energy projects, and adaptation programs, is anchored around three key goals that focus on energy, finance and resilience. It is a roadmap to attract foreign investment in Sri Lanka's economy to boost economic growth and employment, while also accelerating climate adaptation and bringing down the country's greenhouse gas emissions as it transitions towards net negative emissions.

Let us therefore, solemnly pledge today that the trust reposed in each one of us by the global community as their trustees will not only build momentum towards the 2023 summit but would be taken well beyond 2023 to a complete transformation for accelerating implementations of SDGs so as to enable us to handover a safer and better planet to future generation.

In conclusion, may I assure you Madam President that Sri Lanka is committed to taking transformative action in the lead up to the SDG Summit, the convening of which underscores the recognition by the international community that urgent national and collective action is needed to galvanize support for the 2030 Goals.

Thank you.