

THE DEPUTY SECRETARY-GENERAL

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**REMARKS AT THE CLOSING OF THE
2021 HIGH-LEVEL POLITICAL FORUM**

15 July 2021

**Excellencies,
Distinguished delegates,**

I congratulate everyone involved on a successful High-Level Political Forum.

We have had eight solid days of deliberations and reflection.

Nine Sustainable Development Goals were reviewed in depth.

The outcomes of 42 Voluntary National Reviews were presented and discussed.

And a series of side-events engaged the full range of partners that make up the SDG ecosystem.

I commend all participants for their commitment and contributions.

It is clear that sustainable development partners across the world have faced immense challenges over the past year.

Notwithstanding tremendous efforts from many governments, the pandemic has had a deeply negative impact on people's lives – on their health and well-being; on their employment, businesses and incomes; on their education, their safety and their rights – with a particularly damaging effect on women and girls.

The pandemic has contributed to a reversal of SDG progress in some areas, and delayed action on many of the major transitions required to meet our 2030 goals.

At the same time, your contributions over the past two weeks provide lessons for the future, giving reason for hope.

Excellencies,

Many of you highlighted the innovation of policy makers and the courage and resilience of communities during the pandemic.

One frequent observation was that some of the changes put in place to respond to the pandemic can provide a foundation for progress on the SDGs.

Digital learning, for example, was a lifeline for many during the pandemic. The equitable expansion of digital education could help to narrow the digital divide, improve access to learning, and transform education more broadly.

Similarly, many countries responded to the crisis by implementing critical support for the economy, for jobs and for people.

Governments should now consider whether some of these measures can be integrated into comprehensive social protection systems.

Over the course of our deliberations, we also heard how recovery efforts can be designed both to restart economies, and to accelerate SDG implementation.

For example, stimulus packages and Special Drawing Rights can be leveraged to advance gender equality; to boost investment in education, health and social protection; and to accelerate the major transitions required to beat climate change and generate decent work.

Finally, we heard loud and clear that there cannot be a recovery from the pandemic without international solidarity

and cooperation, including through climate finance and financing for development.

This extends to delivering a financial lifeline for developing countries faced with major debt pressures.

And it applies to the mobilization of resources, technology, know-how, and partnerships to facilitate economic transformation.

The UN development system is committed to fully supporting this endeavor.

Under the leadership of empowered and independent Resident Coordinators, our country teams have responded well to the needs and priorities of governments during the pandemic.

And following the reforms over the past three years, they are primed to deliver the transformative support that governments are demanding, in order to accelerate SDG implementation.

The General Assembly review to consolidate these reforms will enable the UNCT under the leadership of the

Resident Coordinator to deliver on the Decade of Action as we work to recover better together.

We must not drop our collective ambition when the needs have never been greater.

Excellencies,

To conclude, I wish to extend my congratulations to the President of ECOSOC, Ambassador Akram, together with the ECOSOC bureau, for their outstanding work in organizing this year's Forum and the entire ECOSOC cycle.

I also thank our colleagues in DESA, DGACM and the Office of ICT, for their dedication and hard work to make this HLPF a success.

And I commend all who have attended this year's Forum virtually, from around the world.

We leave this Forum fully cognizant of the scale of the challenge before us for the remainder of the Decade of Action.

But we also leave with hope and determination.

Decisions taken over the next six months, at the Food System Summit, the High-Level Dialogue on Energy, COP15 on biodiversity and COP26 on climate, can put us back on track to fulfil the promise of the 2030 Agenda and the Paris Agreement.

Let us not forget also, that for many developing countries, the pandemic is still raging, people are still dying at unacceptably high levels and economies are in dire straits.

We must support these countries in their response to the COVID-19 pandemic and in recovering better to accelerate SDG implementation.

This applies first and foremost to ensuring universal access to COVID-19 vaccines. It is critical that the world develop a Global Vaccination Plan to at least double the production of vaccines, ensure equitable distribution through COVAX, coordinate implementation and financing, and support national immunization programme.

With political leadership, solidarity and unity of purpose, we can end the pandemic, secure major improvements in

people's lives between now and 2030, and keep the promise of the 2030 Agenda.

Thank you.
