

Opening remarks by ECOSOC President, Ambassador Munir Akram
Fourth High level Local and Regional Governments Forum
Monday, 12 July 2021, 08:00AM

Excellencies,
Distinguished Delegates,
Mayors, Governors,
Representatives of local and regional governments,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am pleased to join you today at the fourth edition of the High Level Local and Regional Governments Forum. This Special Event, held in connection with the United Nations High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development, is an important opportunity to highlight the critical contributions of sub-national, local, urban and territorial levels to make the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs a reality on the ground.

Let me begin by congratulating the organizers, the Global Taskforce of Local and Regional Governments, UNDESA, UN-Habitat, UNDP and the Local 2030 Coalition, for, convening a remarkable group of leaders and experts to share their insights during the two days of discussions.

Ladies and gentlemen,

As you are aware, since last week, the UN High-Level Political Forum has been reflecting on the theme of “*Sustainable and resilient recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic that promotes economic, social and environmental dimensions of*

sustainable development”. High-level government officials have been joined by UN system leaders and expert practitioners from the scientific community, civil society, the private sector and other critical stakeholders to consider how we can build an inclusive and effective path for making the 2030 Agenda a reality for all in the context of the decade of action and delivery for sustainable development.

The HLPF is also where Member States review their SDG progress in-depth. Starting tomorrow, 43 countries will be presenting their Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs). I am aware that several Member States have reflected on the constructive role of local and regional governments in the development of their VNRs, as well as to the 2030 Agenda implementation.

Moreover, for the first time, this year the HLPF dedicated a formal session to discussing the main challenges and bottlenecks for effective SDG localization. The session also discussed how the Voluntary Local Reviews could be utilized for effective SDG implementation.

During your event over the course of today and tomorrow you will be reflecting on the interconnectedness of the HLPF theme with the realities at the sub-national level. We look forward to learning more about your experiences and solutions as well as your specific challenges.

Ladies and gentlemen,

We are currently facing the greatest challenge for humankind since the creation of the United Nations. The COVID-19 pandemic has imposed unparalleled human suffering and it has directly impacted on hard-fought development progress.

Achieving the SDGs and addressing the climate catastrophe have become much more challenging. More than ever we need close collaboration with, and partnership between all sectors of society.

As President of the ECOSOC, I have worked with UN Member States and stakeholders on several fronts, including on mobilizing the financing required to respond to the pandemic and sustainably rebuild economies, advocating for investments in sustainable infrastructures and science and technology.

We need the leadership of local decision makers and your capacity to innovate, drive change and connect communities to support the path towards a more sustainable and resilient future where no one is left behind. We need your ambition and concrete actions on the ground, and we need to work in collaboration with you in the different contexts and levels.

I hope the discussions today will further reinforce your commitment to the aspirations and universal nature of the 2030 Agenda, and we sincerely thank you for your participation.

I wish you all a successful event.

Thank you.