

Opening of the Ministerial Segment – High Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development

H.E. Mr. Mokgweetsi Masisi, President of the Republic of Botswana,

H.E. Mr. Marcelo Rebelo de Sousa, President of Portugal, Co-host of the UN Ocean Conference,

H.E. Collen Vixen Kelapile, President of the Economic and Social Council,

Mr. Antonio Guterres, Secretary-General of the United Nations,

Distinguished Ministers,
Excellencies,
Distinguished Delegates,

Thank you for opportunity to contribute to the opening of this year's High-Level Political Forum.

This year's Forum comes at a defining moment.

The volume, magnitude, and scale of complex challenges to sustainable development are arguably both unprecedented and unrelenting.



From deepening climate change and regional conflicts, to rising inequality and food insecurity, the challenges we face threaten to derail the goals and targets of the 2030 Agenda.

Yet, there is hope; hope that together we can not only pull through but come out stronger, more resilient, and more sustainable.

Hope that we can indeed right the ship, as they say, and pivot away from the harmful practices that have put us on a self-destructive path.

My friends,

The 2030 Agenda is so much more than a set of targets and data points.

The Agenda and its SDGs represent a vision, a blueprint and a roadmap for the kind of policies all countries must undertake if we are to build a better, more inclusive world.

We must therefore ask ourselves:

- Are current recovery policies conducive to the realization of the SDGs?



- Will these policies lead to the transformative change and systemic reforms needed for a sustainable future?
- And can these policies reinforce universal social protection, health care and education?
- Can they protect eco-systems, clean air, and water?
- Can they build inclusive financial systems and ensure decent living standards for all people?

This may seem like a lot to ask – but, dear friends, this should be our baseline for any plans to build back better.

To break the vicious cycle of crises we must do more than “look” towards a more sustainable future, we must put it into practice.

I have five key recommendations, or asks, for you during this HLPF:

First, we must take action to get us there.

We must invest in innovation, technology and behavioral change that bring about the future we want and need.

This includes increasing investments into areas supportive of social protection, poverty reduction, the environment and climate



action, as well as empowering youth as “agents of a sustainable transformation.”

Second, we must learn the lessons from COVID-19, particularly where systems and policies proved dysfunctional.

We must invest in the kinds of actions that can protect the most vulnerable, ensure resilient livelihoods, and leverage the power of science and technology.

Third, we must push for reform measures in the international financial system, in debt relief and vulnerabilities, and in Overseas Development Assistance and humanitarian relief.

Fourth, we must commit to addressing the situation of the most vulnerable countries. This includes shaping targeted responses to the issues they face.

This also includes advancing a Multidimensional Vulnerability Index (MVI) as a vital tool to help vulnerable countries access financing to respond to these crises.

I am hopeful that the high-level panel of experts that I had constituted to finalize the MVI will be successfully completing



their work before the end of the 76th session and the outcome agreed to by all.

Fifth, we must renew the commitment to the sustainable development of Africa, including on supporting key actions to reach universal vaccination, achieve food security, and ensure energy access across the continent.

Next week (Wednesday, 20 July), the President of ECOSOC and I will convene a special dialogue on the sustainable development of Africa. I invite all of you to join us for this important opportunity to reconfirm the development of Africa as a priority for all.

Ladies and gentlemen,

The pandemic tested the limits of international solidarity.

Yet multilateralism prevails and international solidarity persists.

From the establishment of COVAX and rapid advances in development of vaccines; to the negotiations on a global pandemic treaty and adoption of the recent treaty on fisheries subsidies, we have seen countries and communities come together to find common solutions to common challenges.



We must build on this in every way we can.

The SDG Summit that will be held in September 2023 will be a critical milestone to do just that. As we mark the mid-point in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, we can recommit to the principles of the SDGs in our efforts to rebuild sustainably.

Dear friends,

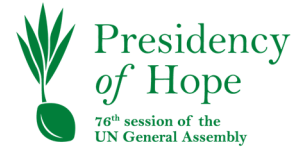
The last three years despite being marked by immense global tragedy and grief, gave us the much-needed pause to reassess the state of our world and our existence, and to see what needs to be fixed, replaced, renewed, reimagined or transformed.

My friends, we have yet to fully seize that historic opportunity for a profound transformation, renewal, and reset.

Let us change that.

Let us resolve to act NOW.

Let us ensure that future generations look back on this pandemic, on this period in history, not only as one of grief and trial, but of renewal and change.



Let us ensure that the pain we have experienced translates into lessons learned, into actions, and into a more inclusive, sustainable, and hopeful future.

I thank you.

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