

OPENING REMARKS

BY

**H.E. MR. COLLEN V. KELAPILE
PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED NATIONS ECONOMIC
AND SOCIAL COUNCIL (ECOSOC)**

**AT THE MINISTERIAL SEGMENT OF THE HIGH-LEVEL POLITICAL
FORUM ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT (HLPF)/HIGH-LEVEL
SEGMENT OF THE UNITED NATIONS ECONOMIC
AND SOCIAL COUNCIL (ECOSOC)**

**WEDNESDAY, 13 JULY 2022
09:00 -10:15 HOURS**

**GENERAL ASSEMBLY HALL
UNITED NATIONS HEADQUARTERS
NEW YORK**

Please check against delivery.

- **Excellency, Dr. Mokgweetsi Eric Keabetswe Masisi, President of the Republic of Botswana;**
- **Excellency, Mr. Abdulla Shahid, President of the 76th Session of the United Nations General Assembly;**
- **Secretary-General of the United Nations, Mr. António Guterres;**
- **Excellency, Prof. Marcelo Rebelo de Sousa, President of Portugal;**
- **Excellencies and Honourable Ministers;**
- **Distinguished Delegates;**
- **Youth Representatives;**
- **Ladies and Gentlemen;**

1. I am deeply honored to welcome you all to the opening of the **2022 High-Level Segment of the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC)** and the **Ministerial Segment of the High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF)**.

2. I extend my sincere appreciation to the President of my own country, Botswana, His Excellency Dr. Mokgweetsi Eric Keabetswe Masisi, for participating in-person in this High-Level Meeting despite his very busy schedule and for accepting my invitation to deliver a Keynote Address.
3. My special thanks also go to His Excellency Prof. Marcelo Rebelo de Sousa, President of Portugal who I am aware had wished to be with us also in-person but could not due to unforeseen circumstances and is therefore joining us virtually.
4. I am equally pleased by the high in-person turnout of Honourable Ministers in this High-Level Segment of ECOSOC, after the past two years of virtual meetings.
5. I am highly encouraged observing the corridors and conference rooms buzzing with conversations, and seeing representatives from a diversity of stakeholders enthusiastically attending scheduled HLPF core sessions as well as a myriad of side-events, VNR Labs and special meetings in-person.

6. I also wish to welcome all who are joining us remotely from all over the world.
7. Virtual meetings have ensured business continuity and indeed tremendously enhanced the broad reach of ECOSOC, thus reaffirming the Council's convening power and a formidable multistakeholder platform.
8. I wish to also commend the **44 countries** that are presenting their Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs) this year.
9. The continued engagement in the VNRs is a testament of the importance we all accord to the work of the United Nations itself and in particular ECOSOC in supporting the review and monitoring of implementation of the 2030 Agenda and its 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Excellencies,

10. At the opening of the HLPF a little over a week ago I asserted that the current challenges must not dampen

our resolve and determination, and that we must not give up but remain hopeful and optimistic.

11. In the past few days while presiding over sessions and listening to many speakers, I am even more encouraged that we know our challenges and solutions. What we need now is to act together in solidarity.
12. It is true that we are still dealing with the devastating impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic and other challenges on people's health, with enormous consequences on our ability to realize the Sustainable Development Goals.
13. It is also true that the pandemic and its impacts have disproportionately affected developing countries, particularly those in special situations, conflict and fragile situations, and the vulnerable populations.
14. After two years of a surreal struggle against the pandemic, it is true that we now live in a world of increased conflict, inequality, poverty, and suffering;

of economic instability; energy and imminent food crisis; increasing debt levels; of a slowing of progress towards gender equality and the empowerment of women.

15. A world with climate crisis looming over us, biodiversity loss and pollution surrounding us.

16. A world with great uncertainty about our future.

17. And yet, one of the key messages that we have heard in the past few days of the High-Level Political Forum is that -- despite our grim times -- there is a continued air of optimism that the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development provides us a framework for building back better.

18. We hear calls on the need to use this unsettled period for transformation of our health, agriculture and food systems, as well as achieve sustainable access to water, energy and close the digital divide.

19. We are hearing calls to adopt sound policies; build resilience; leverage the power of modern

technologies; find innovative ways of financing for the SDGs; focus on vulnerability; and listen to and act based science.

20. Looking ahead, we are hearing calls to turn the situation around and keep moving forward, to work hard and look with hope to the 2023 SDG Summit and beyond. As one panelist bluntly put it, we must not waste a crisis.

Excellencies,

21. In 2015, our leaders adopted the 2030 Agenda and also agreed on the Addis Ababa Action Agenda as a global framework for financing sustainable development as well as the Paris Agreement on Climate Change.
22. We must continue to be guided by these international agreements, as we face our current challenges.
23. The 2022 HLPF provides us with a valuable opportunity to demonstrate our unwavering

commitment to achieving the 2030 Agenda, despite the obstacles and challenges posed by the pandemic and other multiple crises.

24. Let me conclude by urging all Member States and stakeholders to continue to use the 2030 Agenda as our blueprint to achieve a sustainable future for all.

I thank you all for your kind attention.