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AFFAIRS**

**Remarks and presentation of
the synthesis of main messages from 2023 VNRs**

High-Level Political Forum

New York, 10:00 am, 10 July 2023

Excellencies, distinguished delegates, ladies and gentlemen,

I extend warm welcome to the High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development, a crucial platform for reviewing progress on the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

As we convene today, we find ourselves at the midpoint of our journey towards realizing the SDGs and upholding our promise of dignity, opportunity, and peace for all on a healthy planet.

The significance of this year's forum is two-fold. Firstly, it marks a key pre-Summit event, building awareness and momentum towards the SDG Summit in September. Secondly, it reminds us that a radical shift is imperative if we are to fulfill the commitments made in 2015 and achieve the SDGs by the year 2030.

At the heart of our discussions lie the Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs) presented by many countries, each demonstrating their commitment to accelerating SDG progress and sharing their achievements, and, in some cases setbacks, with the global community. We are pleased to witness the active participation of 38 countries, along with the European Union, as they present their Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs).

Since 2015, 188 countries have conducted VNRs, a testament to the global commitment towards the SDGs. It is encouraging to see that countries have improved their preparation, engaging stakeholders more systematically and utilizing multiple tools of analysis.

Amidst the diversity of contexts and challenges, we have witnessed remarkable progress across many nations. Institutional alignment stands out as a key achievement, with countries reflecting their commitment to the SDGs in their constitutions, national action plans, and strategies. This strong foundation provides a bedrock for sustainable development efforts.

The ongoing participation of countries in the VNR process exemplifies their dedication to transparently and comprehensively assess progress. By sharing their experiences and lessons learned, these nations contribute to our collective understanding of effective implementation strategies. They inspire others to follow suit.

The unprecedented challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic have compelled countries to respond with resilience and innovation. Many have implemented measures to manage the crisis, ensuring free testing, treatment, and vaccinations for their citizens and residents. They have also worked diligently to maintain essential health services and provide support to households and businesses through stimulus packages. Such efforts showcase their unwavering commitment to leaving no one behind.

Moreover, we have witnessed notable commitments to environmental sustainability from various countries. Goals such as achieving net-zero emissions and investing in renewable energy sources, highlight the determination to combat climate change and preserve our planet for future generations.

Partnerships, particularly public-private collaborations, have played a pivotal role in advancing the SDGs. These partnerships, forged across sectors like housing and infrastructure development, illustrate the power of collaboration and innovation in driving progress towards sustainable development.

Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,

Even as we celebrate these achievements, we must not lose sight of the persistent challenges that impede our progress. Data remains a common hurdle, with concerns about availability and quality affecting the monitoring of SDG progress. Furthermore, limited financial resources pose constraints on the full implementation of SDG initiatives for many countries grappling with acute fiscal gaps. In some instances, security crises have exacerbated the challenges, hindering progress and exacerbating humanitarian issues.

To overcome these obstacles, countries have adopted innovative strategies and policies that merit our attention. A whole-of-government approach, involving multiple sectors and stakeholders, has been instrumental in ensuring comprehensive SDG implementation in some contexts. Emphasizing stakeholder engagement, including civil society, the private sector, academia, and local communities, has emerged as a key enabler of sustainable development. Moreover, innovative financing models and partnerships have been considered, offering new avenues for mobilizing resources and driving progress.

As we reflect on the progress and challenges highlighted in the VNRs, it becomes evident that we must take SDG follow-up to the next level. With the focus on reporting and reviewing at the international level, we must also strengthen national actions for progress and transformation. This necessitates the integration of SDG implementation efforts into national oversight systems, independent evaluations of national progress, greater involvement of scientists in monitoring and review processes, and a more enhanced use of the Voluntary National Review process.

Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,

The Voluntary National Reviews presented at this forum provide invaluable insights and inspiration for our collective efforts towards the SDGs. Let us learn from the progress achieved and innovative strategies employed. We must forge ahead on our path to a sustainable and equitable future.

Effective engagement with the global public and robust follow-up to SDG commitments and implementation efforts remain paramount in understanding progress, fostering public ownership, and identifying major obstacles.

I am confident that this High-Level Political Forum will generate meaningful dialogue for transformative action. Let us seize this opportunity to reaffirm our unwavering commitment to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Let us work collaboratively to ensure a better future for all.

Thank you.