

**2023 ECOSOC High-level Segment**

**Introduction of Secretary-General's two Reports  
E/2023/57 and E/2023/58  
at the High-level Segment of ECOSOC**

**by**

**Mr. Li Junhua, Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs**

**Thursday, 20 July, 10:00 am, ECOSOC Chamber**

**Madame President of ECOSOC,**

**Excellencies,**

**Distinguished delegates,**

**Ladies and gentlemen,**

**Today, the ECOSOC High-level Segment has two sessions.**

**The first, this morning, is on “*Strengthening UN system institutions for resilient sustainable development*”.**

**The second is entitled “*Overcoming ‘short-termism’ to secure a better future*”. It will be convened here this afternoon.**

**These two sessions are informed by two complementary reports of the Secretary-General.**

**I would like to briefly introduce these to you and highlight their key messages.**

**Excellencies,**

The first report of the Secretary-General, (E/2023/78), focuses on this year's ECOSOC and HLPF theme: *“Accelerating the recovery from the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) and the full implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development”*.

The report offers seven main messages to achieve the objectives of the theme:

*First*, countries need to accord high priority to strengthening the social contract in society. This can be achieved by setting and delivering on ambitious national benchmarks to reduce poverty and inequality, including gender inequality.

*Second*, countries need to step up their efforts to combat the threat of climate change. This will require countries to increase their investment in clean energy infrastructure and renewable energy sources.

Accelerating the renewables revolution presents the best hope for ensuring energy security, while keeping the 1.5<sup>0</sup>C target alive. The energy transition presents one of the greatest investment opportunities since the Industrial Revolution.

*Third*, developing countries at the early stage of their demographic transition need to increase investment in education and skills development of young people entering the labour market. Simultaneously, the need to advance economic and structural reforms, to enable their economies to attract foreign direct investment and technological diffusion.

*Fourth*, closing the gender gap in the labour market can become a major driver of higher economic growth and output in all countries, including those facing an ageing population.

*Fifth*, there is need for a strong commitment to multilateral debt relief and development cooperation, including official development assistance. These measures are critical to restoring fiscal space of many developing countries in the aftermath of the pandemic and other crises.

Effective debt relief calls for an improved multilateral initiative to support debt repayment suspension for vulnerable countries and to take steps towards the creation of a permanent mechanism to address sovereign debt distress. This

also calls for greater attention to long-term strengthening of the international financing architecture.

*Sixth*, countries need to further capitalize on the enormous benefits offered by the digital revolution. To take advantage of the new digital technologies, developing countries need to increase investment in education, healthcare and social protection and to strengthen their public administration capacity.

*And finally, seventh*, there is an urgent need to further strengthen multilateral cooperation as part of our common strategy to accelerate the recovery and the full implementation of the SDGs. This includes renewing institutions such as the United Nations that sustain multilateral cooperation.

**Excellencies,**

The second report of the Secretary-General, (E/2023/89), is entitled “*Long-term future trends and scenarios - impacts on the realization of the SDGs*”.

The report looks beyond current crises and emergencies to reflect on long-term trends and scenarios towards achieving the SDGs and climate change objectives, while leaving no one behind.

The report shows that scientific and technological breakthroughs could become “game-changers” to accelerate sustainability. But to make these new possibilities work for everyone, unprecedented levels of global cooperation, high-impact actions and globally coordinated policies will be needed.

Digitalisation, in particular, has become a pervasive force across all sectors and countries, promising new opportunities for leapfrogging. Yet, 3 billion people remain excluded from these benefits due to lack of basic Internet connectivity, technology, skills, and access.

While great progress has been made in closing digital gaps in terms of simple Internet and Web access in many parts of the world. At the same time, new digital gaps have continuously opened up as new technology infrastructures, such as artificial intelligence, are being built on top of basic connectivity infrastructure.

**The sustainable development pathways presented in the report show that the SDGs and the world's climate targets are still within reach.**

**For this to happen, the world must adopt the right policies and step-up investments, research and the sharing of technology, with sustainable development as the ultimate objective.**

**Let me just highlight just a few issues:**

**The sustainable development pathways propose a globally coordinated package of policies and actions towards the SDGs.**

**This includes increased resource efficiency, high impact on climate change mitigation, a sustainable energy system, and attention to sustainable land and food systems. The goal is to raise overall eco-efficiencies two- to four-fold by 2050, leveraging break-through innovations in electrified transport, hydrogen industry, new generation solar-photovoltaics and digital consumer technologies.**

**Global cooperation is essential, with increased spending on Research and Development, shared lessons from demonstration projects, and potential creation of global or regional sustainability science institutions.**

**To transition to a sustainable energy system, the scenarios stress the need for new business models, improved efficiencies, renewable energy deployment, and ambitious long-term goals to reduce energy intensities. Also, there is emphasis on job creation, social impact mitigation, and a just transition away from fossil fuels.**

**Lastly, protection of forests and carbon-rich ecosystems, promotion of plant-based diets, global public investment in SDGs, and development of sustainable strategies are proposed, all requiring robust international cooperation and support.**

**In all areas, there is a need for political will, focus, continuing research and development, and international cooperation and solidarity.**

**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

**The Economic and Social Council is a place where the world comes together around solutions for sustainable development, for rebuilding differently and better, and for supporting the achievement of the SDGs.**

**The world has the knowledge, the science and technology and the financial resources to reverse the trajectories that taken us off course.**

**We also have inspiring examples of transformative change to build upon.**

**In just a few weeks, Heads of State and Government will meet here for the 2023 SDG Summit marking the halfway point between the adoption in 2015 of the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs, and the target date in the year 2030.**

**Let us come together with ambition, resolve and solidarity, to achieve the SDGs and plan for long term sustainable development.**

**Let us do everything in our power to change course and build solid progress for the future.**

**I thank you.**

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