

THE DEPUTY SECRETARY-GENERAL

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**REMARKS AT THE OPENING OF THE MINISTERIAL
SEGMENT OF THE HIGH-LEVEL POLITICAL FORUM
CONVENED UNDER THE AUSPICES OF ECOSOC**

***[To be read by the Deputy Secretary-General Amina J.
Mohammed]***

Monday, 15 July 2023

**Excellencies,
Honourable Ministers,
Ladies and gentlemen,**

Thank you for the opportunity to deliver this statement on behalf of the Secretary-General.

Today, we gather here in the General Assembly Hall — the birthplace of the Sustainable Development Goals nine years ago.

From the very start, the Goals represented a promise of a better future to hundreds of millions of people across the world.

Last September, world leaders gathered once again in this Hall.

They recognized that this promise was twisting in the wind.

Halfway to the 2030 deadline, the SDGs were in trouble.

Today, just 17 per cent of the targets are on-track.

Future generations deserve more than 17 per cent of a sustainable future.

The barriers are plain to see.

Lack of financing. Geopolitical tensions and mistrust. Ferocious conflicts. The climate emergency. And a crippling debt crisis that is leaving many countries unable to invest in development progress.

We don't have a moment to lose.

At last year's SDG Summit, I called for a rescue plan.

Today, I'm calling on all Member States to move from words to action and deliver urgent and ambitious action in four key areas.

First — we need peace.

Conflicts in Gaza, Sudan, Ukraine and beyond are causing a devastating loss of life.

And they are diverting political attention and scarce resources from the urgent work of ending poverty and averting climate catastrophe.

It's time to silence the guns in line with the UN Charter and international law.

Stop spending on war and destruction.

Invest in peace and development instead.

Second — we must advance the green and digital transitions.

We must speed up the energy transition, transform our food systems and strike a new deal with nature.

I urge countries to put forward ambitious national climate action plans in 2025 that align with the 1.5 degree limit, cover the whole economy and double as investment plans.

Our pursuit of a better future cannot come at the expense of our planet.

I also encourage a surge in investment in expanding access to digital connectivity for all people, everywhere.

Throughout, we must ensure that these crucial transitions are just and inclusive.

That means simultaneously expanding access to education and skills, stronger social protection systems and decent jobs, especially for young people.

Third — we need action on the fuel of development: finance.

The SDG financing gap is growing, and financial conditions in many developing countries are destabilizing.

Thankfully, the global community is beginning to act.

Multilateral Development Banks are embarking on wide-ranging reforms to become bigger and better.

Member States are recycling their Special Drawing Rights to boost liquidity programs for countries in need.

And bolder actions to address the debt crisis are starting to emerge.

But so far these efforts have been insufficient to improve conditions in developing countries.

We must go further and faster to deliver an SDG Stimulus.

That means further increasing the lending capacity of multilateral development banks and changing their business models to leverage the necessary massive amounts of private finance.

It means expanding access to contingency financing for countries at risk of a cash flow crisis.

And it means delivering a comprehensive solution to reduce debt pressures and borrowing costs.

We must also use this moment to reform the global financial architecture, so it addresses today's financial challenges and represents today's world.

The Summit of the Future is a critical opportunity to address these issues.

I urge all delegations to reach for ambition in these final weeks of negotiations on the Pact for the Future and commit to delivering concrete change at the fourth international conference on financing for development next year.

It's time to reform the global financial architecture, once and for all.

And fourth — it's time to double down on the SDGs' central promise to “leave no one behind.”

The SDGs are not just about aggregates.

They represent a promise to prioritize and reach the furthest behind.

A promise to take concrete steps to realize the rights of persons with disabilities in all spheres.

And a promise to tackle the power dynamics at the heart of gender inequality and to end the violence, prejudice and discrimination faced by millions of women and girls across the world.

The SDGs are a people's agenda.

Achieving this agenda means placing vulnerable people and groups at the forefront of national development plans, policies, and budgets.

It means addressing discriminatory laws and practices.

And it means building strong, inclusive and transparent institutions to protect minorities, enhance participatory and boost social cohesion.

Excellencies,

Ladies and gentlemen,

In today's divided world, the SDGs can unite us.

The Goals can also mend the social contract between people and power — between governments and the citizens they represent and serve.

But the success of the Goals means keeping the promises the world made here nine years ago — to end poverty, protect the planet, drive shared prosperity and leave no one behind.

The United Nations family stands with you as your engine room for SDG acceleration— from our Resident Coordinator System, our UN entities and to our Joint SDG Fund,

So let us use this Forum and every day of the next six years to move forward together and accelerate progress for people and planet.

I wish you successful deliberations.

Thank you.
