

2025 High-Level Political Forum

Draft Opening statement by His Excellency Lok Bahadur Thapa (Nepal), Vice-President of the Economic and Social Council

**14 July 2025 – 10:00 am - General Assembly
Hall**

Madame Deputy Secretary-General,
Excellencies,
Distinguished Delegates,
Stakeholder representatives,

On behalf of the President of the Economic and Social Council who sends his deep regrets for not being able to join us today, I am honoured to welcome you to the 2025 high-level political forum on sustainable development (HLPF), convened under the auspices of the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC).

As we commemorate the tenth anniversary of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the world is confronting persistent and emerging challenges, including protracted and new conflicts, rising poverty, widening inequalities, a worsening climate crisis and rapid advances in artificial intelligence and digital technology.

Excellencies,

The global pursuit of sustainable development is at a critical juncture. Progress in achieving sustainable development is alarmingly off track. The annual financing shortfall has now exceeded \$4 trillion. We need renewed commitment to multilateralism and coordinated actions, based on trust, harmony, and solidarity, to restore momentum and deliver on our shared commitments.

This year's HLPF is a crucial moment that gives us hope and encourages us to think collectively outside the box, guided by the overarching theme of *“Advancing sustainable, inclusive, science- and evidence-based solutions for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) for leaving no one behind”*.

Over the next two weeks, we will conduct in-depth reviews of SDG 3 on good health and well-being, SDG 5 on gender equality, SDG 8 on decent work and economic growth, SDG 14 on life below water and SDG 17 on partnerships for the goals.

Our discussions will be informed by key reports that will highlight data and analysis of the gaps and challenges and showcase solutions. These include the Secretary-General's report on SDG progress to be presented later today, reports from the regional

sustainable development forums, and reports on the theme of the 2025 session of the Council and the HLPF as well as on long-term impact of current trends on the realization of the SDGs to be presented at the ECOSOC High-level Segment.

We will hear perspectives from the regions and the United Nations Environmental Assembly and engage with local and regional actors as well as major groups and other stakeholders in thematic discussions to review progress.

We will examine the unique challenges faced by African countries, least developed countries, landlocked developing countries, small island developing States, and middle-income countries.

We will observe the presentations from thirty-seven countries through their Voluntary National Reviews, sharing experiences, challenges and lessons learned

in advancing the SDGs. Most countries are presenting their third VNR, while several are already presenting a fourth review.

Expert Group Meetings, organized by DESA and other UN partners have laid the groundwork for our deliberations including by bringing together experts from multiple fields to identify key challenges, opportunities, and synergies across the SDGs.

The ECOSOC High-Level Segment on 24 July will discuss globalization's long-term impact on the SDGs and explore ways to strengthen the ECOSOC's role to ensure that it is more effective in responding to the challenges posed by a rapidly changing world at the time when the UN and the ECOSOC are commemorating their 80th anniversaries and our multilateral system is being tested.

We hope that these discussions and resources will support informed decision-making and renewed action to advance progress across the SDGs, with Governments continuing to play a central role in bringing the Goals back on track and to the finish line. Undoubtedly, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its 17 SDGs must remain our blueprint to building a more inclusive, thriving and healthy world for all.

The outcomes of the 2024 Summit of the Future and the major conferences and milestones in 2025, including the recently concluded Fourth International Conference on Financing for Development, together provide a comprehensive roadmap for bolstering efforts to achieve sustainable development. They are also concrete opportunities to foster more inclusive, coordinated and effective multilateral solutions for people and planet.

Excellencies, Colleagues,

The HLPF and the ECOSOC High-level segment constitute the apex of the Council's annual cycle, embodying its central role in fostering inclusive policy dialogue, coherence and guidance. In the lead up to this forum, various ECOSOC segments, forums, special meetings, and sessions of subsidiary bodies have brought together governments, the UN system and diverse stakeholders to explore ways to advance our commitments and support preparations towards key intergovernmental processes. They advanced concrete policy guidance and served as inclusive multistakeholder platforms to deepen dialogue and understanding on key issues.

I encourage you to actively engage in the official meetings of the Forum as well as in the valuable array of special events, side events, VNR labs and exhibitions organized by Member States, the United

Nations system, intergovernmental organizations, and Major Groups and other Stakeholders which offer different formats and approaches for enriched conversations in advancing key issues of common concern.

I also encourage delegations to take full advantage of the general debate focusing on the theme “*UN@80: Catalyzing change for Sustainable Development*”, to share experiences, lessons learned, policy guidance as well as provide concrete and transformative actions and initiatives with impact on the ground.

Your voice matters! I invite all participants, both in the room and online, to join our discussions using hashtags #HLPF, #SDGs.

Share your ideas, ask questions and contribute to shaping our future!

Let's harness this HLPF to catalyze bold action to advance the SDGs and deliver on our promises.

I look forward to our deliberations.

Thank you.