

- **Your Honorable Madam President of the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations;**
- **Distinguished delegates;**
- **Ladies and Gentlemen all protocol observed;**

FIRST LET ME INVITE YOU TO WATCH THIS VIDEO

This video is a good illustration of the message we are bringing to the United Nations today. Promote life in a healthy, adequate and sustainable environment. Water is life. The Government of Benin has understood it so well that it has taken a strong commitment; one that is worth being restated before the international community.

The central theme of this year's High Level Political Forum "Mutation towards sustainable and resilient societies" encapsulates the very challenge that Benin is dealing with at the moment. 57% of the rural population and 43% of the urban one still lack access to clean water in my country. As for access to electricity, only 7% of the rural populations have access to electricity compared to 54.5% in urban areas. These relatively low levels are not surprising considering that electricity represents only 2% of the country's energy balance, and that renewable energies account for less than 5% of the country's energy mix. The national sanitation rate is 20% while the degraded lands represent 66% of the country's total land mass. It is therefore a euphemism to say that my country feels concerned by the thematic of this year.

With a full awareness of the challenge at hand, Benin, for the second year in a row, carried out a voluntary national review and came up with eight (08) key conclusions that we wish to share with the international community.

The first is that Benin supports that Integrating the SDGs into national policies is a prerequisite for their achievement. Indeed, since last year Benin has made the integration of the SDGs into its development framework the cornerstone of the success of the said goals. Following the prioritization of the SDG targets, we have aligned our development framework with the SDGs. Thus, we are convinced that our daily actions are part of a positive dynamic toward the achievement of the SDGs.

Secondly, Benin has made the principle of leaving no one behind of the SDGs, a cardinal principle in the design and implementation of public policies. This is organized around four (04) key axes: (i) a social protection for all and especially for the most vulnerable; (ii) the establishment of social safety nets; (iii) favorable legislation toward vulnerable populations; and (iv) balanced spatialization in the implementation of development initiatives. Benin has developed a holistic social protection policy that makes it possible to intensify measures for the most vulnerable groups. We will be launching in the fourth quarter of this year a program denominated Insurance for the Strengthening of Human Capital, that enacts the principles that I mentioned above.

To reinforce the social safety nets for the most vulnerable, Benin has been implementing an initiative for the past two years to target the most vulnerable households in the communities. The initiative allows on one side for conditional cash transfers to households identified as at risk but deemed able to 'perform work of collective interest' to the community; and on the other side for unconditional cash transfers to individuals with disabilities.

In order to sustain the effort over the long haul, Benin is also creating a legislative framework that is more supportive to the most vulnerable. Several laws have been enacted. Without being exhaustive, it concerns on the one hand the law of protection and of taking care of the person living with a handicap and on the other, the law on the climatic changes. To ensure equal opportunities to people living in Benin regardless of disability, the new legal arsenal guarantees the prevention of disability through an appropriate national health policy that is based on early detection and management of disability through vaccination, nutrition, consultations, rehabilitation and treatment.

It is not necessary to indicate that climate change increases the vulnerability of populations by making their living conditions more precarious. We are aware of these challenges and in order to protect the most fragile segments of our society to the climate change, Benin adopted, last month, the climate change regulatory law. This law aims to prevent, protect and manage the consequences of climate changes that could be suffered in Benin in the short, medium and long term.

lastly regarding efforts undertaken to make sure that nobody is left behind, Benin makes a point of ensuring the balanced spatialization of development initiatives. To this end, the Government has put in place agreements between the central Government and municipalities that aim to remove the municipalities from the strong financial constraints that prevent the most disadvantaged of them from implementing the necessary public services. Under these agreements, all the municipalities, regardless of their initial level of financial and technical constraint, will be able to provide to their populations a good level of basic social services.

The third key message is that the Government of Benin considers access to safe drinking water for all by 2021 as a cure for poverty. I said it above and the video element is more demonstrative. Access to drinking water is a right that our citizens have, and it is a duty to our government to provide it. The diagnosis is made, the cost of achieving our target is evaluated and the resources needed for its funding mobilized. We are on track to achieve the SDG for all our citizens within the next three years. This would put Benin ten years ahead of schedule set us as an example.

The fourth message is that our ambition is to reach Sustainable and affordable energy for all through energy autonomy by 2025 and 50% energy mix by 2030. Benin's action in the field of electricity is organized in three areas: firstly, political reforms and institutional reinforcements concerning electricity management structures, then electricity production with particular emphasis on photovoltaic production, hydropower and gasification of biomass. By 2021 a minimum of 600 MW will be installed to boost energy autonomy to 100%. The third axis of the transformation that we want to drive into the electricity sector concerns its distribution.

The fifth message relates to strengthening sanitation and sustainable consumption and production patterns for more a resilient society. Stormwater drainage and basic sanitation are a key priority for the Government. 620 km of roads are under construction in cities across the country, followed by asphaltting by 2021. With regard to basic sanitation, Benin aims to reach 75% of access to basic sanitation services by 2025. We have a clear idea of the trajectory to get there. In order to strengthen our ambition for a more sustainable society, we have adopted a law prohibiting the production, import, marketing and use of non-bio-degradable plastic bags. Shaping our mode of production and consumption towards more sustainable dynamics is a high priority for the Government of Benin.

Our sixth message is about land use. Benin calls for a paradigm shift from "Degrade> Abandonment> Migrate> Sow New Land" to "Avoid - Reduce - Restore". For Benin, SDG 15 is of crucial importance. In our culture in Benin, water is life and land is wealth. Allowing land to deteriorate, depreciate and be destroyed therefore equates to losing one's wealth and to running to one's own loss. We have taken steps to start enacting the paradigm shift that we are calling for. The Neutrality of Land Degradation Targets were adopted along with an agricultural sector development plan, a sustainable land management action plan and a legislative arsenal including, the climate change laws I mentioned earlier and the Coastal protection law. The paradigm shift for us is not an option, but an imperative.

- **Honorable President;**
- **Distinguished delegates;**
- **Ladies and gentlemen;**

The seventh message we wish to share with the international community is the need to develop and promote good practices to better organize budgeting and financing of the SDGs. In this regard, two dynamics are implemented in Benin. First, the costing of the SDGs. Since the beginning of this year, Benin has been engaged in assessing the cost of achieving the SDGs. In order to capture the synergies between the SDGs and sometimes to mitigate the conflicts in priorities that can arise, we implemented a costing approach based on the accelerator method. We already have rough estimates. We are working to refine them to better strengthen the link between planning, programming, budgeting, monitoring and evaluation. The second step is to make the best use of all climate resource opportunities available. To that aim, Benin has rolled out a Country Program for the Environment at the Green Climate Fund, a unifying document for all climate initiatives. It specifies the coherence between all the desired interventions in climates with details that makes it a framework document for discussion on climate action.

The eighth and final message addresses innovations as necessary for a better arbitration for the SDGs. This requires a better orientation of the action of the two major players involved in financing the SDGs: the Government and the technical and financial partners. For the Government, in order to ensure a better control over the day-to-day management of the SDGs, we have developed a tool to measure the sensitivity of the Ministries' annual activities plan to the SDGs. The tool offers as a main added value the possibility of ensuring the formulation of

high-impact ODD activities. With regard to the partners, we have set up a platform to better monitor their interventions in each of the SDGs. This allows us to identify and measure the concentration of our partners' actions in the SDGs and if necessary to undertake coordination or advocacy action...

- **Honorable President;**
- **Distinguished delegates;**
- **Ladies and gentlemen;**

This is Benin's journey on the road towards the SDGs. I would like to take this opportunity to reaffirm the importance and relevance of the High Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development. The culture of accountability that it helps to create, pushes us to do better, and to work harder to quickly satisfy the legitimate aspirations of our populations.

- **Thank you**

WATER

Voice-over

(In a slow rhythm)

Once upon a time in Benin, when arid soils were only dust, the inhabitants of villages had to walk many kilometres in search of me. Because I was not available, they had to make do with a dirty and polluted version of me.

Images of dirty water in a pond, mix with dirty water running in a stream.

VOICE-OVER (CONT'D)

I've seen thousands of men, women, children and even pets die every day, because I was not available. I was a hardly accessible luxury for many people.

Archive images of men, women and children fetching dirty water and drinking from it.

Voice-over (CONT'D)

But, over the years, hope became possible.

(30 seconds)

Archival footages of villagers who have difficulties because of using dirty water, mix to;

Stock footage of animals drinking water from a running stream and also defecating in it, mix to;

Images from archive of children who bathe at the other end of the stream. Mix to;

Image from archive of a fisherman who casts his net into the river. Mix to;

Graphic transition (with the insertion of the date 1990, growing until 2018) where the camera moves away dwellings in a travelling upward, showing a drop of water, as if all these images were contained in the drop of water.

VOICE-OVER (CONT'D)

I am finally here!

Title screen which appears in the water drop: Gold blue (5 sec.)

VOICE-OVER (CONT'D)

(In a faster pace))

I'm mysteriously essential to life. I'm the giver of life. Without me, your world will not exist. When I'm pure, I'm colourless, tasteless and odorless. I am pristine and refreshing and I continue to vibrate the furthest possible. I come in the form of rain, snow, River and sea.

Archival images of rain falling; snow and crystal blue color of pure water in a sea.

VOICE-OVER (CONT'D)

With the Government and the United Nations Development Programme, the brave men and women that are thirsty for development and well-being for their communities made possible easier access to

me. Experts who study me speak for an average of 2.75 out of 5 people, or 42 per cent in rural areas and 55% in urban areas. What still remains insufficient, when we know that by 2021, 4.5 million additional people must be served in rural areas, and 2.7 million in urban areas. It is imperative that population that does not have access to a sustainable and basic sanitation services will be reduced by half on the horizon 2021. A challenge I know dear friends to the program of action of the Government. And innovation in innovation, Public-private partnership was born.

(1min 15sec.)

As soon as the writing of the title disappears, we see the drop of water that flows from a tap, and falls into a source of pure water

Plans of drone from the water flowing with numbers written in graphic images

A transition with the water flowing, shows the image of drilling in human motor skills, dams, Weirs and other

Voice-OVER (CONT'D)

these are my friends. They understood that I am source of life, and for this country is a key ally. They were able to implement additional strategies, thereby securing of the Programme of Action of the Government in the area of water, to the objectives of sustainable development.

(15 sec.)

CUT TO:

Image of the premises of UNDP in Benin, with workers who come and go

Image of the Representative/Resident, who consults a sensitive document on water (report of prioritization or other)

Interview with the representative of UNDP on supplements of strategies, and their importance for the population and State (30 sec.)

Archival footage on the opening of dams, treatment plants and/or by the Minister of water tower

Interview of the Minister of State, who talks about the impacts of this collaboration on beneficiaries, by highlighting the synergies with the other ODD (poverty, food and nutrition, health, education, productive economy, cities and) sustainable human settlement, mode of consumption and Production sustainable. (60 sec.)

Images, highlighting these impacts, especially on poverty alleviation, food production, health, education, etc.

Voice-OVER (CONT'D)

(In a fast rhythm)

I am the principal constituent of all living matter. I represent two thirds of the total weight of man. I existed long before the creation of heaven and Earth, and the world will continue to rely on me to survive. I give breath to the dead land that feeds the world, let the gaiety and life to each House, I favour the progression of electrification, I know back malnutrition, dysentery, cholera, diarrhoea, typhoid, intestinal worms. Without me, no education, no technology, no development. I love to be kept clean and pure. Those who neglect me or refuse to appreciate me, do so at their own peril. I inflict their amorphous land with dirt and stench. But those who appreciate my importance treat me

like a God. And in return, I do their larger crops every year. I give them good health, long life, happiness and prosperity. I give their most able-bodied men, more swinging wives, and make their children more receptive to school. I'm the very strong torrent on which Earth is placed, the essential element that feeds all of your needs. I waterproof your cravings, and cleans you out when you're dirty. Let the Earth suck all my most intimate secrets, and get them on your lips. I'm in the center of the objectives challenges development and, by 2021, thanks the Government and UNDP, I'll thrive around Benin, because I love this country, and it is a pure and healthy water that its population should quench his thirst. I am water

(1 min 25 sec.)

Image of smiling school children using water

Image of Cotonou and other cities in full industrial production and using of water

Image in stop motion of a family (man, woman, and child) at the end of a baby who takes his bath and smiling

Musical score...